

# Quite Right, Mr Trotsky!



DOWN WITH THE  
COMMUNISTS & SOCIALISTS!  
DOWN WITH THE PEOPLE'S  
FRONT AGAINST  
FASCISM & WAR!  
DOWN WITH THE U.S.S.R!  
**LONG LIVE  
THE  
REVOLUTION!**

**SOME TROTSKY MYTHS DEBUNKED;  
AND HOW TROTSKYISTS TODAY HAMPER  
THE FIGHT FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM**

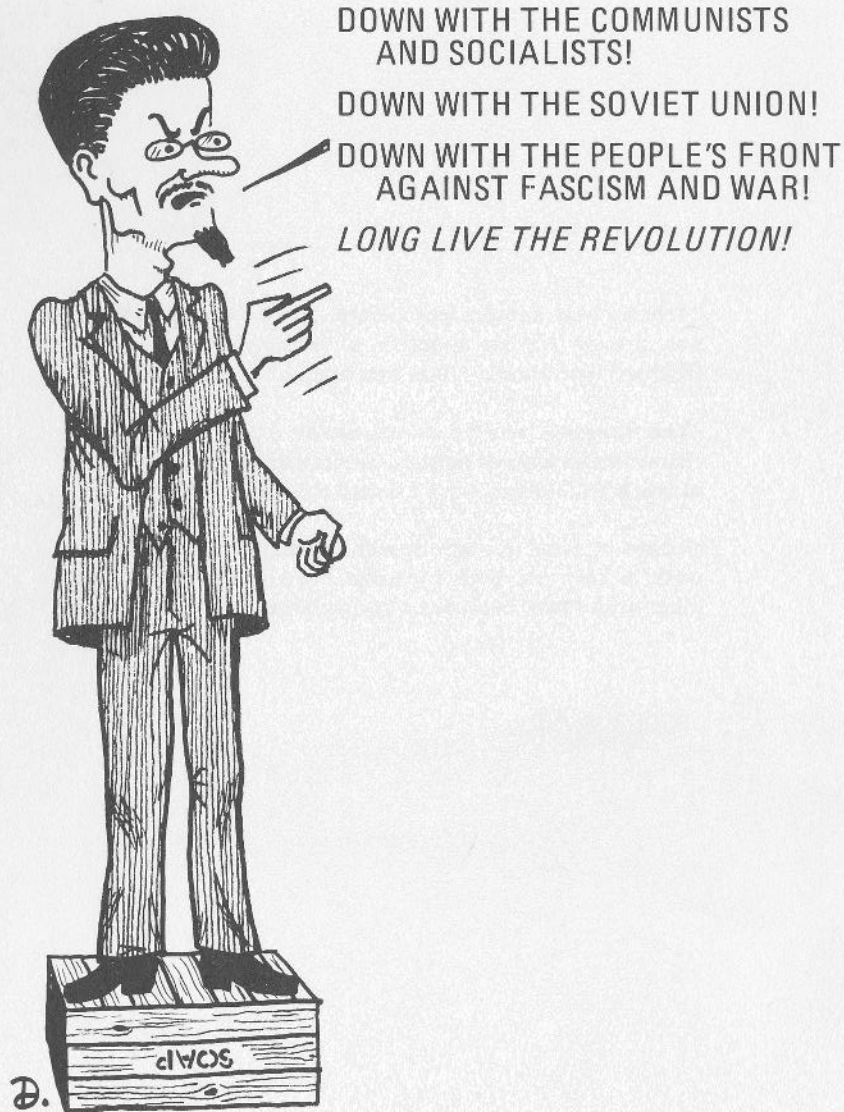
**Denver Walker**

"Trotsky was another degenerate. At the age of eight, he was already a great collector of pornographic pictures."  
(Richard Wurmbrand, "Was Karl Marx a Satanist?")

"The Congress reveals an important aspect of Trotsky's character and sense of politics: his deep dislike of factionalism of any kind." (Tariq Ali, "Trotsky for Beginners")

Neither of these quotations will appear in the body of this work as they are both too silly. Mr Ali's, however, is the sillier of the two, because he knows better.





# Quite Right, Mr Trotsky!

**SOME TROTSKY MYTHS DEBUNKED;  
AND HOW TROTSKYISTS TODAY HAMPER  
THE FIGHT FOR PEACE AND SOCIALISM**

**Denver Walker**

Illustrations by Dino

Harney and Jones, London, 1985

Printed by Speediprinters (TU), London, SW15 2RZ

## CONTENTS

Introduction. . . . . 7

### Part I: TROTSKY—THE MAN AND THE MYTH

Chapter 1  
From Menshevism . . . . . 9

Chapter 2  
... to Bolshevism? . . . . . 17

Chapter 3  
... and into the wilderness . . . . . 25

### Part II: TROTSKYISM IN BRITAIN—THE GROUPS

Chapter 4  
The first of the 57 varieties . . . . . 33

Chapter 5  
The SWP shop . . . . . 39

Chapter 6  
An epidemic of enteritis . . . . . 49

Chapter 7  
The outside left. . . . . 59

### Part III: TROTSKYISM IN BRITAIN— POLICIES AND PRACTICE

Chapter 8  
The People's Republic of Cloud Cuckoo Land. . . . . 71

Chapter 9  
The 64,000 rouble question. . . . . 81

Chapter 10  
War and Peace—by Leo Trotsky . . . . . 93



|                                                                                                        |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 11                                                                                             |     |
| Labour pains . . . . .                                                                                 | 103 |
| Chapter 12                                                                                             |     |
| Trotsky de-liberates . . . . .                                                                         | 113 |
| In place of a conclusion . . . . .                                                                     | 125 |
| Appendices                                                                                             |     |
| Appendix A                                                                                             |     |
| Lenin's "Secret" Testament. . . . .                                                                    | 127 |
| Appendix B                                                                                             |     |
| Trotsky on factionalism . . . . .                                                                      | 130 |
| Appendix C                                                                                             |     |
| Extract from the resolution to the<br>10th Congress of the<br>Russian Communist Party (CPSU) . . . . . | 131 |
| Glossary of Trotskyist<br>organisations and publications . . . . .                                     | 132 |
| Index . . . . .                                                                                        | 135 |

## INTRODUCTION

Be warned! Anyone expecting an elongated version of *The Sun's* "Ten Ways to Ferret Out a Red Mole" will be disappointed by this book. This will be no grim (or otherwise) warning against Trotskyists as dangerous revolutionaries, for the simple reason that I don't believe they are. The purpose behind this book is to show that far from being more "revolutionary" than anyone else (except, of course, in words), Trotsky and his present-day followers in their policies and practice tend to play into the hands of the ruling class they purport to seek to overthrow.

Nor, however, will I go to the opposite extreme and brand all members of Trotskyist organisations as paid agents of imperialism, despite the fact that MI5's Section F7 is known to expend much cash and effort on infiltrating Trotskyist groups. That, of course, cuts more ways than one, as the same applies to communist and left labour groupings.

That might explain some of the erroneous lines pushed by Trotskyism; but it cannot and does not account for the numbers of mainly young people, genuinely wanting socialism and peace, who get caught up in Trotskyism as a reaction against past and present errors (and worse) of some leaders of the working-class movement in Britain. Lenin always argued that ultra-leftism was the price the labour movement had to pay for opportunist leaderships.

Mind you, I will suggest that if members of Trotskyist groups aren't consciously working to divide the labour and peace movements, they are *objectively* doing so. But you have to be careful with words like that: it's a short step from identifying a policy as "objectively" against the best interests of the movement to branding its supporters as deliberate disrupters, which is rarely the case. (In some cases experience may suggest otherwise.)

Nor shall I suggest guilt by association with the leading French Trotskyist Doriot, who became an active collaborator with the Nazis and led a detachment against the Soviet Union for them; or with Karwahne, the Nazi MP at the Reichstag Fire Trial, who had earlier been expelled from the German Communist Party as a Trotskyist oppositionist. But I will suggest that Trotskyists might care to consider the following question: what political movement in the 20th century, based largely on the middle classes (or in Marxist phraseology, the petty-bourgeoisie) and the lumpen proletariat (in non-Marxist phraseology, hooligans) puts forward revolutionary-sounding slogans combined with rabid anti-communism and anti-Sovietism?

There are two such movements: the name of one of them is fascism, and you'll have to work the other out for yourself. Not that I'm equating the two; the latter usually proceeds from the highest of motives, and doesn't lead to such drastic consequences as the first—unless, of course, you consider the division and diversion of the labour and peace movements as a drastic enough consequence, which I do.

Without going as far as that, I would also suggest there's more than a germ of validity in the statement by George Thayer in his book, "The British Political Fringe" (1965). He refers to Industrial Research and Information Service, the anti-communist, anti-union body (still around): "One of IRIS's favourite tactics, when

attempting to wean a communist away from his party is to suggest the man join a Trotskyist organisation. If he does, IRIS knows from experience that within two years the man will be in the political wilderness." You have been warned.

To get back to *The Sun's* ignominious piece of nonsense, I do agree with it on one point: "All the experts warn not to jump to conclusions when you think you've sighted a Trot." I hope I won't be taken as going in for paranoid Trot-bashing. The main danger in Britain today is from the right; but that makes it necessary to point out where those on the ultra-left play into the right's hands. I'm writing as a communist and a supporter of the peace and trade union movements, and hope I can be of some use to people in all three categories.

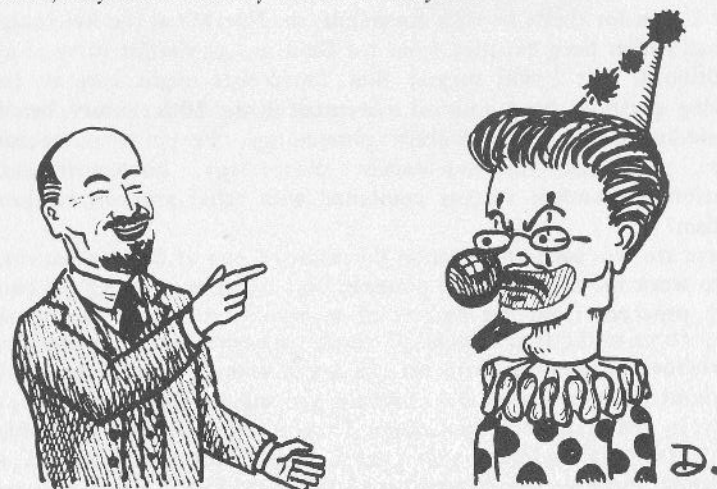
I haven't used *The Sun's* ploy of quoting unnamed experts of doubtful competence and even more doubtful existence to bolster my case. I've documented my sources as well as possible while avoiding the boring expediency of masses of footnotes, which nobody reads. Where no sources are quoted or I'm writing from my own experience, I hope readers will feel able to take things at face value. I never did graduate from any "School of Falsification" (or even Journalism), honest.

I shan't be dealing with other ultra-left movements such as Maoism—the bankruptcy of backers of Pol Pot is pretty self-evident—or anarchism, which hardly exists in Britain and certainly not within the trade union movement. The reason it's necessary to point out the errors of Trotskyism is that it has managed to get at least a toe-hold in the progressive movement; if that toe gets any bigger, it just might crack the fragile rock of which much of that movement is currently made.

If at times I seem to be treating the subject less seriously than it might appear to merit, I can only make one plea in self-defence:

"A joke is the only way of responding mildly to Trotsky's intolerable phrase-mongering."

That's Lenin, May 1914. Trotsky never saw the joke.



# I Trotsky~ the man and the myth

## Chapter 1 From Menshevism...

"Once upon a time . . .

. . . there was a man called Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Leon Trotsky, who took part in the Russian Revolution and was a capable military leader, organiser and an outstanding orator. Though he had some slight differences with Lenin, he was never a member of the Menshevik Party, and by the year 1917, all his differences with Lenin's Bolsheviks had been resolved, mainly by Lenin accepting Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution'. Lenin agreed with Trotsky that it was not possible to build socialism in Russia unless they roused the workers of western Europe to join them in revolution; but had Trotsky, as Lenin wished, succeeded him to the leadership of the Communist Party and the Soviet State, it would have developed much more favourably than actually occurred (he was, for instance, a strong believer in free and independent trade unions) and the Soviet people would have lived happily ever after."

The first sentence of the preceding paragraph is true. The rest is a complete fairy tale. Yet it is a fairy tale that is fervently believed by at least the less knowledgeable of Trotsky's followers today, more than eight decades after the birth of the phenomenon of Trotskyism in 1903; and it is a fairy tale that has also been spread by the media of the capitalist world, so that most people who have heard of Trotskyism would probably believe the above tale to be true.



## Separating the Mensh from the Bolsh

Trotsky and Lenin were indeed in the beginning in the same political party, the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—a far more revolutionary party than its name might suggest, formed in the later years of the nineteenth century in the struggle against tsarism and in favour of socialism in Russia. Trotsky, born into a wealthy landowning family in 1879, had initially supported the semi-anarchist Narodnik (Populist) peasant movement when he first took an interest in revolutionary ideas, but was to switch to Marxist ideas under the influence of Alexandra Sokolovskaya, whom he met in 1896 and who was to become his first wife.

Thus when he and Lenin first met, in 1902 in London, they were both members of the same political party—but not for long (though quite a long time if you believe his present-day followers.) In 1903, the RSDLP was to split into two separate groups that were to become totally irreconcilable—the Bolsheviks (from the Russian “bolshinstvo”—majority) and the Mensheviks (from “menshinstvo”—minority). The disagreement was over whether or not a party hoping to throw off one of the most ruthless and autocratic regimes ever—that of the tsar—needed to be disciplined—or not. Not surprisingly, the latter position was the minority—and Trotsky went with the Mensheviks. He was later to come to accept the need for discipline in running both a revolutionary party and a socialist state—except that he characteristically exempted himself from such discipline.

From an early stage he also exempted himself from the discipline of facts, because he was later to refer to the split as occurring in 1904, by which time he had rejected even the undisciplined discipline of the Mensheviks, to drift about on their edge for thirteen years. This simple amendment would enable Trotsky to deny ever having been a Menshevik—after all, the Menshevik Party had not existed when he was a member of it. Some of his followers today put the date of the split in 1912 (the RSDLP remained a single party *formally* though not in *practice* right up to the eve of the 1917 October Revolution, so they presumably think any date’s as good as another, or the further from Trotsky’s openly proclaimed Menshevism the better.)

But let’s enquire of an observer somewhat closer to the event (writing in 1911):

“In 1903, Trotsky was a Menshevik; he left the Mensheviks in 1904; returned to the Mensheviks in 1905 and paraded around with ultra-revolutionary phrases the while, and again turned his back on the Mensheviks in 1906 . . . Trotsky plagiarises today from the ideas of one faction, tomorrow those of the other. When Trotsky tells the German comrades that he represents the ‘general Party tendency’, I am obliged to declare that he represents only his own faction . . .”

That would suggest that its author (who happens to be V I Lenin) had more disagreements with Trotsky than just on the question of Party discipline, which indeed was the case; the split was between a clearly defined right and left, with Trotsky on the right, though often, as Lenin was to write in 1911, “taking cover behind particularly sonorous phrases” and putting across “*liberal views* with a

Marxist coating”. (How well some of his present-day pupils have learnt from the master!)

But this was at a time when some Trotskyists will reluctantly admit Lenin and Trotsky had “some disagreements”. (Trotsky’s follower Isaac Deutscher admitted that from 1903 until 1917 Trotsky heaped continual insults on Lenin, calling him “hideous”, “malicious”, “morally repulsive” and other similar pieces of deep political insight. Lenin’s responses were more civilised, and more along the lines of political criticism than personal insult—though even he at times found it difficult not to respond in kind.) So perhaps Lenin was being a bit biased in characterising Trotsky as a Menshevik.

Not at all. In 1921, when Trotsky’s followers will tell you that he and Lenin were unanimous, Lenin, in his book “Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder”, speaks of Bolshevism “at its inception in 1903” and describes it existing “as a trend in political thought and as a political party” from that date. This hardly lets Trotsky off the hook with his 1903 Menshevism; and it’s little comfort to those Trotskyists who attempt to justify Trotsky’s belated Bolshevism by claims that the two trends were not clearly defined (unless, of course, the leader of the victorious trend got it all wrong.)

But Trotsky’s ploy of tearing all of 1903 out of the calendar of Menshevism is hardly adequate to disguise his opposition to Lenin, for it was in the year 1904 that he wrote his famous (though not among 1980’s Trotskyists, most of whom have never heard of it) work, “Our Political Tasks.” This was a reply to Lenin’s book “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”, which made the case for a disciplined party.

His earlier work, “What Is To Be Done?” had argued for a core of professional revolutionaries as necessary to inculcate a socialist consciousness among the workers, who, he argued, could by themselves generally only attain to a “trade-union consciousness”. “One Step Forward . . .”, took its title from the fact that despite the Bolshevik victory at the Congress, the Mensheviks (no great believers in discipline, remember) had managed to seize control of the Party paper, *Iskra* (The Spark). It developed and complemented the position of “What Is To Be Done?” by arguing that party intellectuals needed to learn from the discipline of working-class party members.

“The proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class.”

The Menshevik usurpers of *Iskra*, which included Trotsky, didn’t like the sound of this at all; they didn’t fancy being welded by anybody, let alone the workers. “What indignation seizes you when you read these disgraceful and dissolutely demagogic lines,” replied Trotsky in his reply, “Our Political Tasks” (dedicated to “my beloved teacher”, the right-wing Menshevik Axelrod) and continued:

“That very proletariat that yesterday you were saying was spontaneously drawn to ‘trade unionism’ is today called upon to give lessons in political

discipline. And to whom? To the very intelligentsia to which, according to yesterday's scheme, belonged the role of bringing to the proletariat from outside its class, its political consciousness!"

Trotsky couldn't see that the ideas were complementary, not contradictory; and when he added that "it is impossible to treat the best ideological heritage of the proletariat with greater contempt than is done by Lenin", you get the impression that the "best ideological heritage" he was talking about was himself.

But if the book, in which Trotsky stood on his head to call Lenin "the leader of the reactionary wing of our party", later looked like being an embarrassment to him, he had a simple solution. When a collection of his writings were being compiled for publication after 1917, he had it quietly dropped from the list. The same fate befell his letter of April 1 (an apt date), 1913, to the Menshevik leader Chkheidze, in which he said that:

"In a word, the whole of Leninism at this moment is founded on lies and falsehood and contains the seeds of its own decay," and went on to argue for "the destruction of the very bases of Leninism, which is incompatible with the orientation of the workers into a political party but flourishes perfectly well on the dung of splits."

Note: "the whole of Leninism"; not "Lenin's support for Paragraph One of the Party Rules" (on discipline) or "Lenin's opposition to Trotsky's 'permanent revolution'", an opposition which Trotskyists today argue was already fast fading (in fact, it never did). What Trotsky did want to see fade, some years later, when it was proposed to include the letter in a party history being compiled in 1921, was all memory of it. He opposed publication, and, in a letter to the Party History Commission's chairman on December 21, wrote that "the reader of today will not understand, will not apply the necessary historical correctives, and will simply be confused." His real worry was over the possibility that they would understand all too well.

#### Trotsky's permanent wave

What then, was Trotsky's famous theory of "permanent revolution", where did it come from, and at what stage is it supposed to have infected Lenin? "Permanent revolution" comes from Marx and Engels, founders of scientific socialism and the First International:

"While the democratic petty-bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to conclusion as quickly as possible . . . it is our intent, our task to make the revolution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power". (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol.10, p.281.)

They were writing in the mid-19th century, at a time when in most countries it

was necessary for large elements of feudalism to be eliminated, for the capitalist class to come to power and initiate a "democratic republic". But though the capitalists would call for the support of the workers in this revolution, they could afterwards be expected to turn on them; but, as Marx and Engels said later in 1850, the possessing classes could be made to submit "to the dictatorship of the proletariat by keeping the revolution in continual progress until the achievement of communism" (*ibid*, p.614.)

So is that what Trotsky meant by "permanent revolution"? His idea certainly had something in common with that of Marx and Engels—its title. But that was about it. Though Lenin and the Bolsheviks were committed to Marx' and Engels' idea, Trotsky formulated his from 1905 onwards under the influence of Parvus, a Russian living in Germany. Parvus' views were ultra-leftist; Trotsky had just been flirting with the Mensheviks again; together they returned to Russia at the time of the 1905 revolution and teamed up with the Mensheviks yet again. This may all seem a little contradictory, but that's the story of Trotsky's life.

Lenin accepted the Marxist position that bourgeois democracy must be established by the overthrow of tsarism—and the weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie as a class meant that the workers and peasants must play a leading role in this—and that "in the struggle against this past ['autocracy, serfdom, monarchy and privileges'] in the struggle against counter-revolution, a 'united will' of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for there is unity of interests.

"Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the worker against his master, the struggle for socialism." ("The Two Tactics of Social-Democracy", 1905.)

Thus Lenin argued that the workers and the peasants could together bring about the democratic republic, from which base it would be possible to proceed towards socialism. Is this what Trotsky and Parvus were talking about in the same year? The fact that Lenin several times in the same work refers to Trotsky as a "windbag" might tend to give the impression that it was not.

That would be a correct impression. They were proposing the immediate imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat—workers' power—rather than Lenin's suggested democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants—revolutionary democracy. They agreed with Kautsky (the German Marxist later to abandon revolution) that "the peasants may render considerable support but cannot play a leading role." Thus were the majority of the population to be ignored under Parvus' and Trotsky's slogan, "no tsar, but a workers' government", as opposed to Lenin's belief in a "united will".

There was one little snag with Trotsky's theory, as he admitted in the preface to his book "1905": if an alliance between workers and peasants was impossible, the working class would inevitably "come into hostile collision not only with all the groupings of the bourgeoisie which supported it in the first stages of its revolutionary struggle, but also with the broad masses of the peasantry with the help of which it came to power." So, outnumbered ten to one as they were in Russia, the workers would inevitably be defeated—unless they received "the direct state support of the



European proletariat", as Trotsky wrote in "Results and Prospects" (1906). Some results! Some prospects! Inevitable defeat unless the workers' cavalry comes to the rescue! (Trotsky is said, probably erroneously, to have spent some time as an extra in silent films while in the US—maybe he got the idea there.) Some revolution! Decidedly "temporary"!

Thus Trotsky's "theory" combined revolutionary noises—immediate establishment of workers' state power; with defeatist pessimism—inevitable clash with the peasants; and more ultra-left optimism—rescue from simultaneous revolutions in the West.

Small wonder that in 1914, Lenin described Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution" as "absurdly 'Left' ". But for the time being, in the aftermath of the tragic defeat of the 1905 Revolution, this argument was to some extent academic. In exile, Trotsky was to edit a newspaper called *Pravda* (Truth—no relation) in 1908, and then, with his usual ease in switching from right to left—after a period of inactivity—set up his "August Bloc".

#### The August Caesar

Trotsky's August Bloc was not so-called because it lasted a month—it lasted eighteen whole months; that is quite an achievement when you consider the disparate nature of the groups that made it up. It was set up in response to the Sixth RSDLP Congress, which formalised and finalised the break between Bolshevism and Menshevism—but that didn't stop Trotsky. The aim of the August Bloc was to reconcile the irreconcilable. (He didn't go about it in the best of ways; he was very busy writing letters to all and sundry from his Vienna HQ attacking the new paper published by the Bolsheviks: it was called *Pravda*, and Trotsky was probably peeved that it had greater success than his by now defunct paper of the same name (you may have heard of the Bolshevik *Pravda*; it's still going, with a daily circulation of about 10,000,000).

The eighteen months of the August Bloc's existence are ignored by his admirer Tariq Ali in his "Trotsky for Beginners". In fact, to be on the safe side, he says nothing about the years between 1908 and 1914. For not only was the Bloc set up to reconcile two irreconcilable groups, it did it by bringing together their most extreme elements, the Liquidators and the Otzovists.

The two groups were alternative approaches to the severe repression following the defeat of 1905 Revolution. The Liquidators wanted to close down the revolutionary underground party and set up a legal, reformist, non-revolutionary public organisation. The Otzovists ("recallers") wanted to recall the Bolshevik deputies from the Third Duma (the tsar's purely consultative "parliament") and go in for secret underground work. They were, in one case, to the right of the Mensheviks, and in the other, to the "left" of the Bolsheviks. They should have been impossible to bring together—and who but Trotsky would want to?—except that they were both in a state of collapse, so probably desperate enough to unite with anyone. The same thing happened nearly 70 years later in Britain, when two nearly defunct Trotskyist groups—the I-CL (nothing to do with computers) and the

"Weasel" (led by the "Mole") united despite their very different brands of Trotskyism (see Part II).

Perhaps it was Trotsky's own ability to mix right and ultra-left in his own personality that enabled him to hold the Bloc together for as long as he did. It's the closest he got to working the miracles that some of his latter-day followers obviously think him to have been capable of. But fall apart it was bound to eventually, and fall apart it did. Lenin commented:

"The famous uniters even failed to unite themselves . . . the Liquidators and Trotsky are the worst splitters . . . the Liquidators do have their own physiognomy, a liberal, not a Marxist one. Trotsky, however, has never had any 'physiognomy' at all. The only thing he does have is the habit of changing sides, of skipping from the liberals to the Marxists and back again, of mouthing scraps of catchwords and bombastic parrot phrases."

In fact, this "physiognomy-less" leader of the Bloc had left the Bloc in 1913, some time before its final break-up. Back as a maverick in the movement, he started his own magazine called *Borba*, or "Struggle", in February 1914. It must have been a struggle, too, for it didn't see the year out, despite its claims to be a broad workers' magazine. Lenin commented that:

"Trotsky's 'workers' magazine' is Trotsky's magazine *for* the workers, for it bears no trace either of workers' initiative or of contact with workers' organisations."

Lenin ridiculed the condescension of *Borba*, which contained explanations of such words as "territory" and "factor". He also ridiculed its claims to be "non-factional", and asked if the unexplained word "non-factionalism" wasn't rather more difficult to understand than "territory" and "factor", and accused Trotsky of spreading "glaring falsehoods". Trotsky's talk of "non-factionalism", he argued, was a cover for the fact that different trends were no longer "factions" but had solidified into united parties—all bar Trotsky, who "is known to everybody who is in the least familiar with the working-class movement in Russia as the representative of 'Trotsky's faction'."

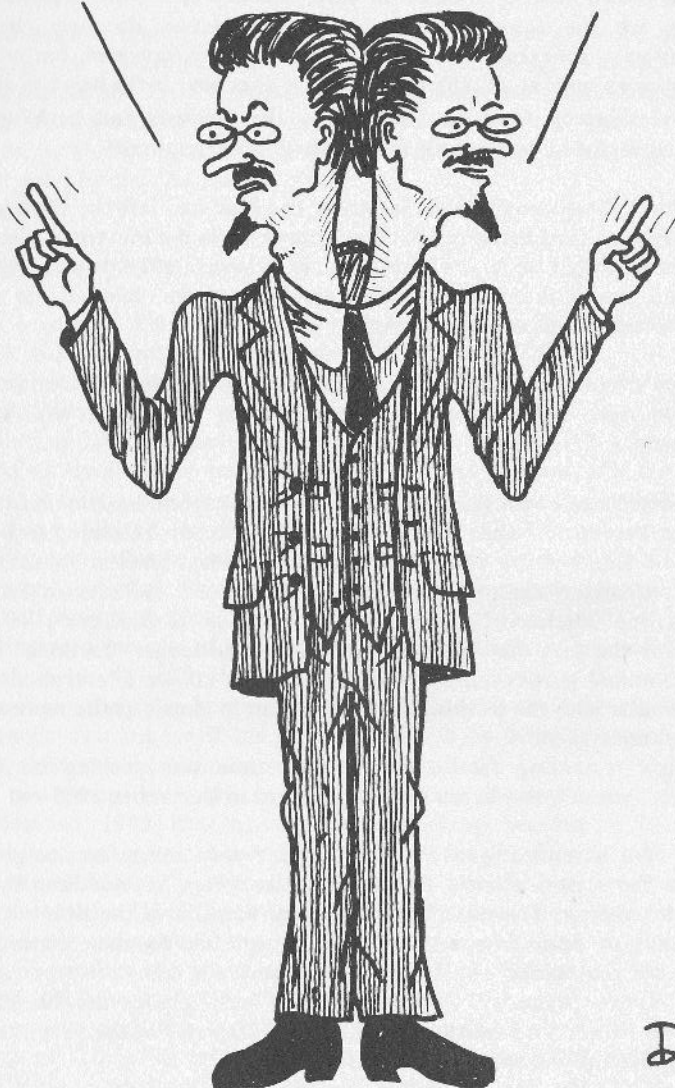
But Russia's remaining factionalist at that time was pushing his line on "permanent revolution", and Lenin was to comment in December 1915 on:

"Trotsky, who is repeating his 'original' 1905 theory and refuses to give some thought to the reason why, in the course of ten years, life has been bypassing this splendid theory. Trotsky's original theory takes from the Bolsheviks their call for a decisive proletarian revolutionary struggle and for the conquest of real power by the proletariat, and from the Mensheviks it takes the repudiation of the role of the peasantry . . . Trotsky is in fact helping the liberal-labour politicians in Russia who by the 'repudiation' of the role of the peasantry mean refusal to rouse the peasantry to revolution!"

This was spoken by the man who, according to the Trotskyists (and Trotsky himself, after Lenin was safely dead and unable to contradict him), came around to Trotsky's view of "permanent revolution" less than two years later.

I CANNOT CALL  
MYSELF A BOLSHEVIK  
—May, 1917

THERE IS NO BETTER  
BOLSHEVIK THAN ME!  
—November, 1917



## Chapter 2

### ...to Bolshevism?

#### Enter Inter-Regionals

When the First World War had broken out, Lenin showed no signs of coming round to Trotsky's position on "permanent revolution", but Trotsky did show signs of coming round to Lenin's, rather than the Mensheviks', position of opposition to the imperialist war. But signs, like slogans, can be misleading. Trotsky recognised the imperialist nature of the war—but not Lenin's slogan of turning the imperialist war into civil war and calling for the defeat of their own ruling class.

Trotsky later conveniently forgot—in order to demonstrate his "unity" with Lenin—that during the war he worked jointly with the Menshevik leader Martov on the newspaper *Nashe Slovo*, which put forward his own watered-down views on the war, "Peace at any price" and "neither victory nor defeat" alongside those of out-right supporters of the war—a fine sort of unity with Leninism.

At a conference in Zurich in November 1914, where Lenin put forward his strategy, Trotsky opposed it on the grounds that the war had "paralysed the revolutionary potential" of the workers, and it was only after the conclusion of the peace between the imperialist powers that revolution could be seriously considered. As often happened, when Trotsky expected too little of the workers they disappointed him by taking the revolutionary action of which they were incapable, turning their rifles on their officers and returning home to overthrow the tsar, without waiting for the end of the war as Trotsky said they should.



Trotsky, since 1916 in the United States, returned to Russia at the time of the February/March 1917 Revolution, his followers will tell you, as a committed Bolshevik. Or did he? Here are the words of a contemporary commentator:

"Trotsky arrived, and this scoundrel at once ganged up with the *Right* Wing of *Novy Mir* [a journal of socialists in exile] against the Left Zimmerwaldists [supporters of Lenin's revolutionary line on the war]!! That's it!! That's Trotsky for you! Always true to himself—twists, swindles, poses as a Left, helps the Right, so long as he can . . ."

Those vituperative words came from the pen of Lenin on February 19, 1917, whose views, they might suggest, were less than identical with those of Trotsky. Nevertheless, some of Trotsky's allies had more sense than he had. The small group with which he was at that time associated, the "Inter-Regional Conference of United Social-Democrats", began to see the correctness of the Bolshevik Party's leadership. Despite their connections with the Mensheviks, they recognised the consistent opposition of the Bolsheviks to the war, and deplored those Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders who had joined the capitalist provisional government that was hell bent on continuing the slaughter at the front.

So it was that in the early summer of 1917 a delegation from the Inter-Regionalists met a delegation from the Bolsheviks with a view to uniting with them. However, although they were offered places on the Central Committee and the editorial board of *Pravda*, the unification did not take place—thanks, according to the minutes of the meeting, to the obstructiveness of the leader of the Inter-Regionalist delegation.

This particular gentleman was not satisfied with these terms: joining was not good enough, he asserted, and insisted that it must be seen as a merger of equal parties, though his own was outnumbered by the Bolsheviks by more than fifty to one, and to make this clear, he insisted that the name "Bolsheviks" must be dropped. When his terms were found unacceptable, he led a walk-out, insisting that "I cannot call myself a Bolshevik." Many would agree. The gentleman in question was Trotsky.

If any of his followers wish to dispute the validity of the minutes, they should be warned that they are in the handwriting of the leader of the Bolshevik delegation—a certain Lenin.

The Inter-Regionalists did, however, join with the Bolsheviks at the latter's secretly-held Sixth Congress in August—Trotsky, being in jail at the time, couldn't prevent them. However, on his release, he went along with the decision. Not only had he little option—standing aloof as a haughty individual, much as he had earlier enjoyed and was later again to enjoy that pose, would have got him nowhere—but, despite the increasing anti-revolutionary repression of the provisional government, it was clear that the vast majority of the workers and a growing section of the peasants were on the side of the Bolsheviks. Such bandwagons are not to be missed.

#### Nobody told Lenin

Trotsky's personal prestige as chairman of the Petrograd Soviet, and his undoubted

(certainly not by himself) talents as organiser, orator and writer, won him a place on the Central Committee of the Party he had so long opposed, but now gave unqualified assurances of his support for. There was, from his later-expressed point of view and that of his supporters, another justification for his acceptance of this position: Lenin had come round to his point of view.

Trotskyists argue that the proof that Lenin had adopted Trotsky's "permanent revolution" came with Lenin's "April Theses", when he put forward the idea of a quick transition from a democratic republic to a workers' state. But this was not missing out the alliance of workers and peasants for a democratic republic that Trotsky had considered impossible; rather a recognition that the alliance had been so quickly and effectively forged that the transition from one stage to another could be carried out with a much shorter interim period than previously thought necessary.

One flaw in the Trotskyist view is the fact that nowhere in Lenin's writings from 1917 to his death do you ever find him once acknowledging his change of heart and his indebtedness to Trotsky. Lenin was not arrogant, and would certainly not have covered up such an important transformation—one can only presume that Trotsky forgot to tell him that it had taken place.

The only evidence of any such "admission" by Lenin came in a suicide note by one of Trotsky's friends—and only ever read, it would seem, by Trotsky himself. There is, however, some slightly more convincing evidence against the unanimity of Lenin and Trotsky:

"Trotsky has stated in the International that in all those questions of principle on which he disputed with Lenin, Lenin was right—and particularly on the question of permanent revolution and the peasantry."

That's from the "Platform of the Left Opposition" (December 1926), the signatories of which include . . . Trotsky! Four years later, he was also to admit his disagreements with Lenin with the publication in Berlin of his "Permanent Revolution": "My way of looking at the matter is really different than Lenin's way." All of this was later conveniently forgotten.

But if, in 1917, Lenin hadn't changed, neither, contrary to appearances, had Trotsky. He showed how consistent he was by sticking to his old position on the war, "neither victory nor defeat", in a slightly modified form. That might not have been too great a problem had he not, after the victory of the October Socialist Revolution, been in the post of foreign minister and supposedly negotiating an end to the war.

#### Brest forgotten?

Trotsky's appointment as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs had a disastrous effect on what could have been a speedier and better implementation of the new Bolshevik government's first decree—the Decree on Peace (yes, the Soviets were talking about it even then.)

Sent to Brest-Litovsk by Lenin to conclude a peace with the Germans that would give the war-weary Russians a chance of beginning to build their new society—and told to accept whatever terms he could get—Trotsky instead decided to in-

indulge in his favourite pastime: posing. He told the German delegation: "We wage no war; we conclude no degrading peace", and announced the demobilisation of the Russian Army. The result of this "revolutionary" posture was a massive German advance. Lenin countermanded Trotsky's demobilisation order and was obliged to conclude a peace far more degrading than the one at which Trotsky had turned his nose up.

Lenin said of those who sabotaged the Brest Peace (little remembered as an event of importance by Trotsky's followers):

"You are assisting German imperialism, because you have surrendered wealth valued at millions in guns and shells . . ." not to mention lives and territory.

This criminal error of Trotsky's made the forthcoming wars of intervention against the young Soviet Republic not only easier to organise but more difficult to repulse. It has to be said that in his role as Commissar for War Trotsky played an important role in resisting the invaders and the Whiteguard anti-Soviet Russian armies they backed, and he showed undoubted military ability. Yet the presentation of Trotsky by his followers as father and sole organiser of the Red Army is, to put it mildly, an exaggeration.

Some, such as Tariq Ali in his "Trotsky for Beginners", go further than mere exaggeration. Ali presents Trotsky as having grave doubts about the use of former tsarist officers in the Red Army, but thinking that everything will be all right if each has a "burly communist" looking over his shoulder. In fact, Trotsky bitterly resented the system of "political commissars", the workers set to watch over the tsarist officers whom he personally preferred to see in command. In his autobiography, he wrote of one such officer who was removed from his post as a plotter against the Red Army thus:

"Vatzetis in his moments of inspiration would issue orders as if the Soviet of Commissars and the Central Executive Committee did not exist."

This, from a supposed Bolshevik, is intended as *praise*. In fact, Trotsky surrounded himself with such people, despite numerous criticisms and warnings from the Party, particularly at its Eighth Congress in 1919.

But Lenin had unbounded faith in Trotsky—Trotsky tells us so. He claimed to have been given a pad of blank forms by Lenin—blank, that is, except for Lenin's signature as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars authorising any order Trotsky saw fit to write on the forms. But while the telegrams sent out by Lenin countermanding Trotsky's demobilisation order at Brest still exist, Trotsky never produced a single example of his famous blank order pad. We'll have to take his word for it.

#### A union marches on its stomach?

When the Civil Wars and the Wars of Intervention were won, the task of peaceful construction began—and an important role would be played by the trade unions.

But Trotsky seemed to forget he wasn't running the army any more, and advocated applying the same methods to the unions. At the 9th Congress of the Party (now retitled Communist Party—Bolsheviks) he had advocated "militarisation of labour" as an "indispensable method", and in the same year advocated the "shaking up" of the unions and "selection", rather than election, of leading personnel.

Trotsky, whose present-day followers are in the main supporters of "independent trade unions" like Solidarnosc in Poland, argued that unions under socialism had no role as defenders of the workers against the employers—as the employer was a socialist state, Trotsky argued that their only role was to organise production. Now, that is indeed a role that unions take on under socialism but not their sole role. Lenin argued that they were needed for "the protection of the material and spiritual interests of the masses of the toilers by the ways and means that this [Soviet] apparatus cannot employ."

Many Trotskyists today remain staunch supporters of Solidarnosc, despite its declared policies of "mixed economy", anti-abortion, handing education and the media over to the church, and overthrowing Poland's socialist state. One of the reasons for the rise of Solidarnosc was the failure of Poland's unions to act in the way advocated by Lenin to look after the workers' everyday interests. But no Polish leader, from Gomułka to Jaruzelski, has ever advocated the appointment of trade union officials by the state. Even Tebbit and King are a bit more subtle than that. Such an approach is left to Dr Ley of the Nazi Labour Front and . . . Leon Trotsky. Trotsky, fortunately, lost the argument. His followers forget he ever put it forward.

#### Even in the tomb

Trotsky's most important disagreement with Lenin was to arise after the latter's death—perhaps the wisest time to disagree with him. But another disagreement, most embarrassing to his followers (the ones who know about it) came into the open first.

When Lenin died on January 21, 1924, Trotsky was on a recuperative holiday after a bout of flu. He did not return for the funeral but instead, as he later wrote in "My Life",

"spent long days lying on the balcony facing the sea . . . as I breathed the sea air in, I assimilated with my whole being the assurance of my historical rightness . . ."

He might not have been so sure of the "rightness" at the Party Congress the following May. At that Congress was read out Lenin's letter, written in December, assessing the qualities of the leading members of the Party, and particularly "the two outstanding leaders", Stalin and Trotsky. Lenin made no political criticisms of Stalin, but advocated his removal from the post of general secretary of the Party because of his "rudeness", to be replaced by someone "more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades."

Stalin offered his resignation to the Congress, which unanimously refused to



accept it. The word "unanimous" includes Trotsky. Lenin's judgement was later shown to be, as he himself said, "of decisive importance", but there was no-one that the Congress (or Trotsky) could think of to equal Stalin's ability in the post. And indeed, the decade that preceded the period of distortions of socialist legality that lasted from 1935 to 1953, Stalin ably represented the views and will of the Communist Party in the struggles against those who wanted to divert it from its course, the building of socialism.

Trotsky was cited in Lenin's letter for "non-Bolshevism"; and perhaps even more significantly, for showing "excessive enthusiasm for the purely administrative side of the work". Thus the supposed arch-opponent of bureaucracy stands condemned by Lenin of . . . bureaucracy!

After having voted for Stalin to remain in office, Trotsky tried to redeem himself by attacking the party general secretary for having "invented" the theory of "socialism in one country". That just couldn't be built, he argued, and his supporters still do, even after it's been done. But what Trotsky at least had the sense to do was to dress his argument up as a disagreement with Stalin, when it was in fact a disagreement with Lenin.

In 1915, in "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe", Lenin had written that

"Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even one capitalist country alone."

Lenin returned to this question several times, lastly shortly before his death in the article "On Co-operation" in 1923, where he asked rhetorically whether

"the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat with many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc—is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society . . .?"

Trotsky didn't think so. He either hadn't read Lenin's numerous works on this question, or he hoped others hadn't. He continued arguing that socialism couldn't be built in the Soviet Union—even while the Soviet workers and peasants were busy building it, and consequently getting more than a little fed up with his telling them they were wasting their time.

### Self-expulsion

Trotsky was not only against the majority opinion, he was against the party's rules. Not only did he oppose the agreed policy of building socialism in the USSR, he organised groups within the party to work against the agreed policy.

In 1921, on Lenin's recommendation, the Tenth Party Congress had ruled that organised groups or "factions" working within the party for their own ends were not conducive to either democracy or efficiency, and consequently their existence

was not acceptable. Trotsky, having voted in favour of the resolution outlawing factions, went on to form several. Many of his followers argue (as he sometimes did) that the ban was only meant to be temporary, though "temporary" is a word in the resolution that is only noticeable by its absence.

But still, even after having formed two factions in 1923 and 1926 (each time promising to abandon factional activity after being taken to task), Trotsky was still given the opportunity to take part in a nation-wide discussion within the party in 1927 on whether his own views or those of the majority of the Central Committee were correct. The result? Trotsky—4,000; the Central Committee—724,000. Not very impressive. Trotskyists argue that his defeat was due to the decimation and demoralisation of the working class in the Civil War. In fact, then as now, the majority of the Soviet Communist Party's members were workers—it was Trotsky's middle-class followers who were demoralised.

Just how confident Trotsky was of the correctness of his own ideas can be gauged from his "Draft Criticism of the Programme of the Communist International"—though not from what it says. This document, taken out of the country in 1926 by American Trotskyist James P Cannon, is described by C Van Gelderen in his preface to "The Twentieth Congress and World Trotskyism" as "a masterpiece of Marxist analysis"—but it was one the Congress delegates didn't get the benefit of. According to Van Gelderen it was "revealed only to a selected coterie of delegates and was not submitted to the Congress for discussion." Dealing with a "selected coterie" isn't what you'd expect from a principled communist—but then we're talking about Trotsky.

But you have to give him an "A" for persistence. Having promised in 1926 never to set up another factional group in the party, and having failed to get even one per cent of the vote in the 1927 discussion, he went on to form yet another faction, and lead his tiny band of followers in anti-Government demonstrations on the tenth anniversary of the Revolution in November 1927. These weren't well received by the pro-Government demonstrations that outnumbered them thousands of times over.

Not surprisingly, Trotsky was expelled from the party and finally thrown out of the country altogether. It's difficult to see what he had to complain about (though of course, complain he did). After all, by this time he had come to the conclusion that the Soviet Revolution was irretrievably lost—unless revolutions elsewhere came to its aid. The USSR was giving him an opportunity to go and lead them. He never did.



## Chapter 3

### ...and into the wilderness

#### The Trotsky School of Falsification—I

In 1931, Trotsky produced his book "The Stalin School of Falsification". In it, he accuses Stalin of distortions of historical fact in the interests of self-aggrandizement—a charge later also to be laid against him by N S Khrushchov, though not in relation to the earlier period of which Trotsky was writing. Trotsky's problem was that he had already shown himself capable of precisely the same fault of which he was accusing Stalin, and the book itself contains more than one example.

Most notably, it contains for the first time published anywhere the fulsome praise of Trotsky supposedly spoken by Lenin in November 1917. Referring to the question of a coalition with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, Lenin (Trotsky tells us) said: "Trotsky long ago said that a union was impossible. Trotsky understood this, and from that time on there has been no better Bolshevik."

Lenin supposedly said this at a time when Trotsky had only been a member of the Bolshevik Party for three months—and three months prior to that had refused to join the Bolshevik Party. It's the same Trotsky who just a year earlier Lenin described (in a letter written on March 8, 1916) as "a Kautskyite, that is he stands for unity . . . with Chkheidze's [Menshevik] parliamentary group", and seven months earlier (letter to Inessa Armand, August 4, 1915) of being in favour of "unity with the opportunists". When, then, was Trotsky's famous conversion to the



need for a final break with the right wing—said to have taken place “long ago”? And what is the evidence for Trotsky’s assertion of Lenin’s praise?

The evidence is an unconvincing photocopy of a page supposedly expunged from the minutes of a meeting of the Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks when these were being set up for publication ten years after the October Revolution, in 1927. Trotsky says that despite attempts to “junk” the section concerned, “the proof sheets with all the notations fell instead immediately into the hands of the Opposition. It is not the only document of this kind!” (though I’ve yet to come across another.)

Quite apart from the fact that Lenin’s supposed remarks are clearly nonsense in their historical context, is it probable that the document would have fallen “immediately into the hands of the Opposition?” And if it was a “living and rather important page” in the history of the Revolution (apparently on the sole basis of its praise of Trotsky), why wait till 1931 to publish it? And hadn’t Trotsky retained his original official copy of the minutes? “No better Bolshevik” aside, certainly there was no better collector of material on himself than Trotsky. And why, when his claims to Bolshevism were being cast into doubt and dismissed by many for several years earlier, did Trotsky fail to produce Lenin’s statement in self-defence? I venture to suggest it’s because Lenin never said anything so silly.

Trotsky had, though, two years earlier, produced stunning evidence in his own favour. In his “My Life” (1929), he quotes a letter to him from his supporter Joffe in 1927 to the effect that “I had heard Lenin admit that even in 1905, *you, and not he*, were right.” The letter was written just before Joffe’s suicide, so you might query whether its writer was wholly rational (he was a sick man, suffering from TB and a nervous disorder—and 1927 was long before Trotskyists could claim to fear for their lives because of their views), so Trotsky adds that Joffe had earlier told him that Lenin had said in 1919, on the question of “permanent revolution”, “Yes, Trotsky proved to be right.”

This is the sort of “evidence” that Lenin was thinking of in February 1914, when, in his work “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, he wrote: “Trotsky could produce *no* proof except ‘private conversations’ (i.e., simply gossip, on which Trotsky always subsists).” But in this instance, that’s understandable, for, as I mentioned earlier, nowhere in Lenin’s writings is there a single line in which he admits to having come round to Trotsky’s position.

Lenin being dead, he could not personally answer such nonsense from Trotsky. The next year, 1932, Trotsky was to write “On Lenin’s Testament”—republished as “On the *Suppressed* Testament of Lenin” by the US Pathfinder Press in 1970. Trotskyists today all agree with that additional word, and so would Trotsky, for in the work he refers to Lenin’s “Letter to the Congress” (“Lenin’s Testament”) as being “concealed by Stalin and his group from the party”. But let’s seek the advice of someone who was around at the time, and attended the Congress at which the “testament” was read to all delegates:

“In several parts of his book [“After Lenin’s Death”] Eastman [an American ex-communist] says that the Central Committee ‘concealed’ from the Party a number of important documents written by Lenin in the last period of his

life . . . there can be no other name for this than slander against the Central Committee of our party. From what Eastman says it may be inferred that Vladimir Ilyich intended those letters, which bore the character of advice on internal organisation, for the press. In point of fact, that is absolutely untrue. During his illness Vladimir Ilyich often sent proposals, letters and so forth, to the party’s leading institutions and to its congress . . . if not all these letters were published, it was because the author did not intend them for the press. Vladimir Ilyich did not leave any ‘will’, and the very character of his attitude towards the party, as well as the character of the party itself, precluded the possibility of such a ‘will’.

“What is usually referred to as a ‘will’ in the emigre and foreign bourgeois and Menshevik press (in a manner garbled beyond recognition) is one of Vladimir Ilyich’s letters containing advice on organisational matters. The Thirteenth Congress of the Party paid the closest attention to that letter, as to all the others, and drew from it conclusions appropriate to the conditions and circumstances of the time.

“All talk about concealing or violating a ‘will’ is a malicious invention and is entirely directed against Vladimir Ilyich’s real will and against the interests of the Party he created.”

This article, in *Bolshevik*, September 1, 1925, to be so violently contradicted by Trotsky, who said that the party leadership at that Congress “transgressed the will of Lenin”, was written by . . . L D Trotsky! Thus, by his own earlier words, Trotsky stands accused of “a malicious invention . . . entirely directed against Vladimir Ilyich’s real will and against the party he created.” Enough said?

No, not quite. In the same 1932 piece, Trotsky writes of an article written by Lenin only days after his “Testament” on the question of re-organising the Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection. Trotsky tells us that at a meeting of the party political bureau he found himself opposed six to one as the only member supporting publication of the article, and claims that that the others supported a proposal by Kuibyshev that a single fake copy of *Pravda* be printed to fool Lenin; that he argued single-handed against this for an hour, when the late arrival of Kamenev somehow transformed his six-to-one minority to a unanimous vote in favour of publication!

Trotsky claims that the argument was won by the realisation that Lenin would not be fooled and would publish anyway—a self-evident fact, as the article had been delivered by his own wife. Trotsky either expects us to believe that the majority were too stupid to realise this fact during a whole hour of discussion and more, or he expects us to be stupid enough to believe that such a fantastic “forgery” proposal could have been put forward in the first place. He also claims to have “documents” to prove this nonsense. His own “notes” of the meeting, presumably.

If so, these will be found in the archives of Harvard University—the thoroughly bourgeois institution to which he left all his papers in his last will and testament.

As to the “suppressed Testament”, it was indeed referred to on several occasions



in the Soviet press, including an article in *Pravda* on November 2, 1917, reporting a speech at a Party Central Committee meeting the previous month, when extracts of the "Testament"—including those parts critical of Joseph Stalin—were read out by none other than Joseph Stalin.

#### Out of touch on the touchline

These were some of the creative historical treatments to which Trotsky subjected past events, as was his new use of the term "Bolshevik-Leninists" to describe people like himself who had little claim to either of the double-barrels. The present, and the future, were to be subjected to equally inventive analysis.

Trotsky's departure from the USSR coincided roughly with the beginning of the First Five Year Plan which was to lay the industrial basis of Soviet socialism and transform the USSR from an agrarian society into a predominantly industrial one. Trotsky both said that such industrialisation could not work and that it was merely a copy of proposals that he had put forward five years earlier—hardly two assertions that it's wise to place side by side.

Whether or not what was built as a result of the five year plans (and something certainly was) is socialism, I'll discuss in a later chapter. But Trotsky's assertion that his own proposals were being copied (an assertion echoed by the tale of the windmill in Orwell's "Animal Farm") is groundless. When he was making noises about large-scale industrialisation, the USSR was recovering from war and famine, and still building up its economy through the New Economic Policy, which allowed a measure of private enterprise under strict state control.

It's strange to hear a self-proclaimed Marxist taking such an un-historical approach as to consider what's possible in 1929 was equally possible half a decade earlier—and he didn't even think it was possible in 1929! Trotsky's cry of "I was robbed" is like telling someone whose child is learning to walk at twelve months that they'd have been *running* nine months earlier "if you'd only listened to me."

But such was Trotsky's contrary approach that even his sympathetic biographer Isaac Deutscher felt obliged to comment that his policies always seemed to be determined by those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International—whatever they said, he'd say the opposite. Thus, when between 1929 and 1932 a number of Communist Parties adopted what was later to be acknowledged as an ultra-left position by denouncing all social-democratic leaders as traitors and "social-fascists", Trotsky attacked them. Yet when the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International adopted the policy of Popular Fronts against Fascism and War, he denounced that too—as a betrayal of the revolution.

Incidentally, Trotsky wrote that the Seventh World Congress would not even have taken place had it not been for the pressure of his own Fourth International. This is a measure of either Trotsky's remarkable prescience or that of the Communist International, because the Fourth International wasn't set up until *four years after* the Seventh Congress! To be fair to Trotsky, though, he had been *talking* about it for some years.

The Trotskyist paper *Workers Press* was to go even further than Trotsky when, on May 6, 1975, it described the Comintern's Seventh Congress as "a congress of

lies, organised and addressed by liars in order to deceive the working class and cover up the betrayals of Stalinism." Anyone who thought it was a serious attempt to devise an anti-fascist strategy must be mistaken. And anyway Trotsky himself in 1937 claimed that "the Politbureaus of the Communist Parties all consist of paid agents of the GPU" (Soviet security police).

Trotsky, who had attacked the Communist International and the Soviets for betraying revolutions in Germany and China in the 1920s (with what possible motive it's difficult to understand), now accused them of doing the same in France and Spain. He wrote of the "Stalinist clique strangling the Spanish Revolution." The means of accomplishing this was the sending of massive Soviet aid and thousands of communist volunteers in the International Brigades to betray the Spanish Republic by dying in its defence. You might be forgiven for thinking that what defeated the Spanish people was the treason of Franco, the massive Nazi and Italian military assistance and the shameful blockade by Britain and other countries under the name of "non-intervention".

Trotsky knew better. All that was needed, he said, was "to proclaim that from now on the land, factories and shops will pass from the hands of the capitalists into the hands of the people. The fascist army could not resist the influence of such a programme for twenty-four hours; the soldiers would tie their officers hand and foot and turn them over to the nearest headquarters of the workers' militia."

If that sounds like cloud-cuckoo land, it's got nothing on his description of the election of the Popular Front in France in 1936 with its largest ever vote as a sign of its defeat and bankruptcy:

"The voter has expressed his will—so far as he can in the straitjacket of parliamentarianism—not in favour of the Popular Front but against it." ("Whither France?")

In this election the Communist Party had doubled its vote. In the same work Trotsky said that the party "must fall to pieces"—yet in 1936 it had more than trebled its membership to 288,000.

There were weaknesses in the Popular Front, acknowledged by the communists. Their alliance with the socialists was too much a top-level agreement, admitted general secretary Maurice Thorez, rather than rank and file unity; this contributed to the Front's defeat. But Trotsky was opposed to the Front's very existence. He claimed that it damped down the class struggle—though the year of its accession was marked by numerous strikes for better pay, hours and conditions, and although its period in office saw the number of organised trade unionists in France rise from 1,000,000 to 5,000,000.

#### Trial and error?

Trotsky's attitude to the anti-fascist possibilities of the Soviet people was a little different to his assessment on Spain. Firstly, although at some times he called such a development impossible, at others he spoke of the possibility of the USSR itself becoming fascist, referring to the "bourgeois-fascist grouping in the bureaucracy" as he does in his "Transitional Programme". He further predicted that in a war with



Nazi Germany the USSR would suffer defeat (it didn't) but that a "political revolution" along Trotskyist lines would follow (it didn't).

Certainly on the Munich betrayal of Czechoslovakia there's little difference between Trotsky's position and that of Chamberlain and Hitler's other appeasers: according to Trotsky "a defeatist policy" was necessary for his followers in Czechoslovakia, where "the main enemy is in our own country—the ruling class". This policy, he admitted, could "serve the military purposes of Hitler", but what of that? As long as "we have a revolutionary policy that leads to the conquest of power" all will be well—not that they *had* such a policy.

Add to all this his claims that the largest section of what was to become the Fourth International was its secret underground grouping within the USSR, and it's difficult to see the justification for his total dismissal of the Moscow trials of a number of his former associates in the USSR between 1935 and 1938. After all, if a Nazi victory would bring Trotskyism, and Trotsky claimed to have his own conspiratorial group against the Soviet Government, there's at least a circumstantial case.

But it has to be admitted that the trials took place in a period when there were serious violations of socialist legality in the USSR, and many thousands of innocent people were executed or jailed. It's easy to be whiter than white about such things, as Trotskyists are. Seen in the context of a single socialist state surrounded by hostile fascist and militarist states the events of the time become more understandable, if not excusable.

But to respond to the revelations about the period 1935-1953 made at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 by saying "We told you so", as many Trotskyists did at the time, is wide of the mark. For the argument of the Trotskyists had been that the nature of the "Soviet bureaucracy" made such terrible events inevitable. Yet those days are long gone. No serious spectator on the political scene can seriously suggest, whatever their criticisms, that such events have occurred since 1953. The blame is far more to be laid at the door of the hostile encirclement rather than that of a supposed self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

Many innocent victims of those times have been exonerated by the Soviet Government. But we are entitled to question the blanket exoneration given to Trotsky and his friends at the time by the Dewey Commission in the United States. Usually put forward as an unbiased tribunal of world opinion, this was, at least according to some who sat on it, little more than a Trotsky fan club. The writer Carlton Beale wrote that

"the hushed adoration of the other members of the committee for Mr Trotsky throughout the hearing has defeated all spirit of honest investigation . . . the very first day I was told my questions were improper. The final cross-examination was put in a mould that prevented any search for truth . . . The Commission may pass its bad check on the public if it desires, but I will not lend my name to the possibility of further childishness similar to that already committed."

Baltimore Sun associate editor Mauritz Hallgreen, who also resigned from the preparatory commission, was convinced that

"the American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky has become, perhaps unwittingly, an instrument of the Trotskyites for political intervention against the Soviet Union."

Despite Trotsky's own reference to "the unprejudiced verdict of the Dewey commission", there's little recommendation of impartiality there. But to skip forward a few years, the USSR has been convicted in the court of Trotskyist (and bourgeois) opinion, of the crime of the murder of Trotsky himself. On what evidence? None.

You will search everything written on the murder of Trotsky in August 1940 by Ramon Mercader alias Frank Jackson alias Jacques Mornard without finding a single scrap of evidence, other than the bald statement that he was "an agent of the Kremlin", to which even the Trotskyist Isaac Deutscher adds a qualifying "presumably" in his essay "Trotsky on Stalin". Indeed, much more points to his being a disillusioned Trotskyist. To provide some "evidence", the film "The Assassination of Trotsky" has Alain Delon as Mercader punting down a river imagining seeing the reflection in the water of Joseph Stalin looking down at him from a bridge. Some proof!

What was there for the USSR to gain? Trotskyists claim that other defendants were framed and made "to confess" falsely in order to enhance the prestige of "the bureaucracy". That sounds improbable, but without his "confession", a political assassination of Trotsky could only produce an anti-Soviet martyr—which, of course, it did.

### Trotsky goes Fourth

Trotsky's death, in his well-guarded Mexican fortress, did more to enhance his reputation than his last achievement during his lifetime—the setting up in 1938, after years of prevarication, of the Fourth International.

Trotsky himself had earlier dismissed a "Fourth International" as a body "where subjectivism, hysteria, adventurism and revolutionary phrasemongering are presented in the most final form . . . a 'left-wing scarecrow'." And so he finally set it up at a secret meeting in Paris, grandiosely sub-titling his brainchild the "World Party of the Socialist Revolution."

In his "Transitional Programme", adopted as its founding statement, Trotsky speaks of "the advanced workers, united in the Fourth International", and denounces those "sceptics" who ask if the time is ripe for its formation, and says that outside its ranks "there does not exist a single revolutionary current on this planet really meriting the name". Grandiose words to be adopted at a meeting of less than thirty people "representing" eleven countries.

The programme—full title "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International"—begins by telling us that "The world political situation as a

whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat"; that is, Trotsky wasn't leading it. Its final paragraph admits that,

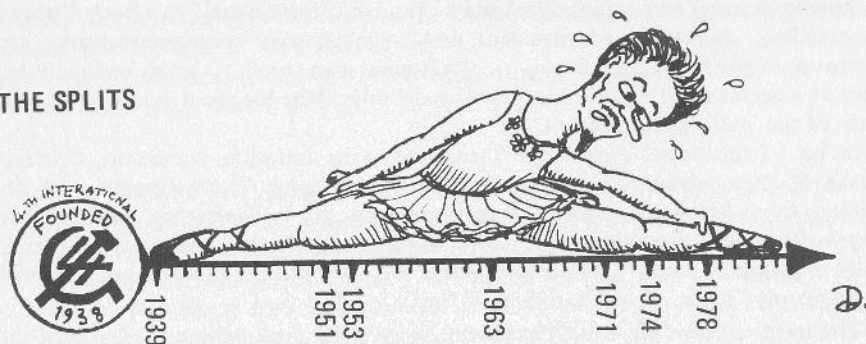
"Yes, its ranks are not numerous because it is still young . . . if our International be still weak in numbers, it is strong in doctrine, programme, tradition, in the incomparable tempering of its cadres. Who does not perceive this today, let him in the meantime stand aside. Tomorrow it will become more evident."

That pledge of growth has been honoured—in more ways than one. The world total number of Trotskyists has indeed grown on occasion—such as 1956 (Hungary and the Soviet Communist Party's 20th Congress attracting some demoralised communists to Trotskyism for a short while) and the "student revolts" of 1968 adding a few more, though the Trotskyist movement still remains small compared to its large power of disruption and confusion. But the number of Fourth Internationals has certainly grown. With major splits having taken place in 1953, 1963 (at a "reunification" conference), 1971 and 1978, there are now no fewer than eight international organisations claiming exclusive rights to the mantle handed down by Trotsky.

In forthcoming chapters we shall meet the British representatives of the United Secretariat, the International Committee and the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency of the Fourth International; the Fourth International (Posadist); the international Spartacist tendency; International Socialism; and the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (Workers Power). I shall mention here, though not with reference to a British group, the International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, led by Pierre Lambert, who broke with the London-based International Committee in the 1970s. This group is rumoured to have one whole branch of supporters in Britain—hidden somewhere in north London. But as I seriously doubt its existence, I shan't bother you with it.

When Trotsky founded his "International", he claimed for it "a spotless banner". That's true enough. In the many years since its foundation, the Fourth International has never *betrayed* a single revolution. That might have something to do with the fact that, despite the feverish activity outlined above (and following), it's never actually *led* one.

## THE SPLITS



# II Trotskyism in Britain~ the groups

## Chapter 4

### The first of the 57 varieties

#### Citizen Reg

The first Trotskyist organisation in Britain was set up in 1932, following the expulsions of Reg Groves and others from the Communist Party. They set up an openly Trotskyist group as opposed to the small currents of support for Trotskyism that had previously existed within the Communist Party. The name of their enterprise reflected its nation-wide influence and organisation: it was known as the "Balham Group". It began with a membership of three.

This initial restriction of British Trotskyism to a single London borough (unfortunately *everyone* agrees that you can't build socialism in one borough) creates a remarkable parallel with BBC TV's "Citizen Smith", who fictitiously set up his "Tooting Popular Front" over forty years later. The TPF, based only two stops further down the Northern Line of the London Underground at Tooting Broadway, had about as much influence on Britain's workers as the Balham Group (that is, it never really existed), although its fictional membership was somewhat higher—at four.

However, the comparison with "Citizen Smith" is perhaps hardly fair; the Balham Group was to go on to increase its membership to somewhere in the region of double the original figure (about half a dozen), though it must be admitted that it didn't actually *do* anything. This didn't prevent Pluto Press (in its Socialist Workers Party days) from producing an expensive pamphlet on the history—or non-history—of the Group. But in the six years from the foundation of Trotskyism



as a movement in Britain, it is doubtful if that "movement" at any stage had a combined membership of much more than a dozen.

These "organised groups" were not, to be fair, the only Trotskyists in Britain. By 1938 a few small groups had been set up, but there were also the Trotskyists within the Independent Labour Party. Their influence within the ILP was to grow throughout the 1930s, and perhaps even until the sad demise of that organisation—or its transubstantiation into "Independent Labour Publications"—in the 1970s. Much of the energies of the British Trotskyists, within and outside the ILP, from the mid-1930s onwards were directed against the formation of a People's Anti-fascist Front, despite the fact that the ILP itself had been involved in a similar joint activity with the Communist Party and the left of the Labour Party.

When James P Cannon of the US Socialist Workers Party came to Britain in 1938 on Trotsky's instructions, to canvass support for his plans for the setting up of the "Fourth International" in Paris that year, he found the tiny collection of "independent" (outside, that is, the *Independent Labour Party*) Trotskyists already divided into at least four warring factions, all composed of former Communist Party members.

These included the Militant Group, gathered around the publication *The Militant* (sounds familiar?); the Workers International League—a breakaway from the Militant Group led by Jock Haston and Gerry Healy; the Marxist League, publishing *Workers Fight* (not to be confused with the 1970s publication of the same name) led by C L R James, who continues even today to prattle a strange mixture of anti-Sovietism and cricket commentary; and a tiny grouping around Henry Sara and Harry Wicks—two of the three original "Balham Popular Front", Citizen Groves having departed by that time into the Labour Party.

Somehow or other, Cannon persuaded this disparate bunch to unite—though Haston and Healy's WIL retained a degree of aloofness, expressing their doubts about the potential permanence of such an affair—at least for long enough to set up a common organisation, the Revolutionary Socialist League, and to send delegates to the foundation conference of the Fourth International.

### Triumph of the WIL

However, as Healy had—correctly, for once—predicted, the Revolutionary Socialist League fell apart almost immediately upon the return of its delegates from Paris, leaving his own Workers International League as the sole organised contingent of Trotskyism in Britain by 1939. Five years later, the WIL was to transform itself into the Revolutionary Communist Party, under Haston and Healy, and again manage to unite the few Trotskyist activists in Britain, this time around itself, for a further five years. But in the meantime came the momentous events of the Second World War.

The same Trotskyists who had denounced the policies of the Popular Anti-fascist Front and collective security against Hitler Germany as traitorous compromises with the bourgeoisie went on to accuse the USSR of collaboration with Nazism when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was forced on the USSR by the

refusal of Britain and France to jointly come to the aid of Czechoslovakia with the USSR, despite having put their names to promises to do so.

With remarkable agility, the walkers of the Trotskyist tightrope did another about-face in 1941 when the course of the war was radically altered by Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union—but again they managed to make their new slogans sound progressive. Despite the fact that Trotsky had declared the defeat of the USSR not only inevitable but desirable—from the point of view of the overthrow of "the bureaucracy"—the Trotskyist newspaper *Socialist Appeal* declared in November 1942 that "Russia's war is progressive . . . that of America and Britain is imperialist . . . there can be no real united strategy between America and the Soviet Union because they are based on two different systems and therefore fighting for two radically different aims."

This publication was later to become the journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party. As with later publications of that group and its antecedents, such as *Socialist Outlook* and *The Newsletter*, it spent some time denying all contact with Trotskyism. Also in common with them, it put forward "revolutionary" policies like those above and its statement in December 1942: "The capitalists in control are fighting for loot, markets, war material and colonial slaves. To convert this war of imperialism into a real struggle against fascism, it is necessary for the working class to take power."

Sounds great, doesn't it? But *Socialist Appeal's* "support" for the USSR whilst "opposing" imperialism in effect meant opposition to the Second Front, the demand for which the Trotskyists of the day in any case opposed under the "revolutionary" slogan of "no boss class armies on the Continent". And making "anti-fascism" dependent on the overthrow of capitalism in Britain could realistically mean only one thing—not fighting Hitler.

Such mistaken views might perhaps be considered understandable in the heat of the moment. After all, the Communist Party and the Communist International had themselves—in my view rightly—been denouncing the war as imperialist till 1941, and even after that the Western allies showed little interest in fighting the Nazis on the European mainland until 1944 (though the Trotskyist campaign against the Second Front should be given little credit for that). But in hindsight, no doubt sober reflection will have rectified the anti-war sloganeering that played into the hands of Hitler.

Well . . . maybe not. The Workers Revolutionary Party, latest in a line of successors to Healy's WIL, recently published a biography of one of its leading lights, "Fighter for Trotskyism Robert Shaw 1917–1980" (despite well-known WRP links with the acting profession he was *not* the Robert Shaw of screen fame). Its author, Mr Shaw's widow, boasts of his work for *Socialist Appeal*, which opposed the war, and of his connections with strikes by thousands of miners in 1942 which, despite their protestations of no such intentions, seriously hampered the anti-Nazi war effort.

Still, the Socialist Workers Party weren't around at that time, so they don't need to justify the "revolutionary" stance of not fighting Hitler. Well, they might not *need* to, but it doesn't *stop* them. *Socialist Worker* in May 1982 carried an article by Pete Gillard entitled "Was the Second World War Really About Fighting



Fascism?" I don't know why they bothered to fill an entire page with it, and waste all that time, effort and printer's ink, when they could easily have substituted a single word: "No". But of course such a line has to be justified, especially to older readers who might have had anti-fascist "illusions" as they marched off to fight.

"The aim of the war machine was never to 'fight fascism'," Mr Gillard tells us. "It had been to defend an empire on which 'the sun never set and the blood never dried'. That meant, for a period, fighting Germany and Italy and their fascist regimes.

"But this fight was subordinated all along to defending British capitalism's hold on other countries, regardless of the wishes of the local population."

Thus a kernel of truth—the fact that Britain's rulers' main concern in World War II was the preservation of Empire and markets—is built up into the nutty proposition that the war was not anti-fascist. Ignore the fact the even some members of our ruling class were capable of recognising and opposing the monstrous nature of German fascism. Whatever their intentions, the nature of the war from 1941 onwards was a people's struggle against fascism—and one that was crowned with victory. So the correct answer to Mr Gillard's question is not the one he points to—"No, whether the workers thought so or not", but "Yes, whether the bosses thought so or not"—and embarrassingly enough, some of them *did*.

#### Back to Class

The dilemma of the Trotskyists over the war was ended in May 1945 by the Red Army—by the irritating ploy of winning it. The Trotskyists, formed by this time into the Revolutionary Communist Party, should have welcomed the end of the war as leaving the way open for the strike actions and class struggles and disruptions they had been advocating throughout it—though many of their members doubtless had failed to understand the revolutionary significance of their slogans and joined the millions fighting fascism on the battlefield.

So were they grateful? Not a bit of it. The inconsiderate communists, who during the war had subordinated all other struggles to the struggle to defeat Nazism, went back to the fight against the ruling class in Britain, as did the trade union movement, thus removing from the Trotskyists their exclusive position—during the war—of calling for strike action. Furthermore, their wartime slogan of "Break the Coalition—Labour to Power", aimed at disrupting the anti-Nazi coalition, had been ruined by the inconsiderate British people, who committed the crime of putting it into effect by the landslide Labour victory of 1945.

This disorientated the Trotskyists, who normally only ever put forward slogans that they know to be unrealisable. In the thus confusing post-war situation the Revolutionary Communist Party saw a rapid decline in its membership from its end-of-war highpoint of perhaps five hundred. To its rescue came the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, which at that time was still on speaking terms with Healy, and which was, incredibly enough, to remain relatively united for a further three whole years after its second congress in 1948.

However, prior to that congress, the International Secretariat—no doubt to their subsequent regret—came to the aid of Healy and Haston, whose factional

grouping within the Revolutionary Communist Party had seen the principled way out of the numerical collapse of the organisation: disband it! This they resolved to do—at least as a publicly existing body—in line with the 1947 statement by the International Secretariat: "Our movement which is now stagnating dangerously in Britain can become reanimated and considerably strengthened if it begins to put into operation a long-drawn-out, carefully studied and systematic work as a tendency within the Labour Party."

Thus, the Revolutionary Communist Party was dissolved and its members entered the Labour Party in response to a policy which, when it was later adopted as the general line by the Third Congress of the Fourth International in 1951, its 1940s practitioner Healy was to denounce as "capitulation to Stalinism", relying, no doubt, on the short memories of Trotskyists, or, more likely, the short "life expectancy" of their membership of Trotskyist groups.

The year 1951 was also to see the defection from "official" Trotskyism (as official as any movement existing in secret within another party can be) of what was to become the International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party) over the question of the nature of Soviet society and how best to denigrate it. Their development and that of Healy's group (known in the 1950s by the lucidly descriptive title "The Group") will be dealt with in their respective sections to come.

The organisational split that occurred in the Fourth International in 1953, a year before its Fourth Congress, left the British Trotskyist movement looking more than a little schizophrenic. Some went with Ted Grant, who temporarily formed a group known as International Socialist (not, of course to be confused with the International Socialists, though at that time they too were submerged in the Labour Party) before later setting up the Revolutionary Socialist League, out of nostalgia for the days of the short-lived pre-war Trotskyist unity, publicly known nowadays as the Militant Group (not to be confused with the Militant Group!)

In the confusion of 1953, a group of individuals began deep and secret penetration of the Labour Party, to emerge after a decade and a half as the International Marxist Group and be recognised by at least one Fourth International (there by then being several) as its official British section in 1969. From these four groups stem the vast majority of Trotskyist organisations existing in Britain today, not to mention—though I will later—many that have been thrown up, merged, or vanished into oblivion in the intervening three decades since the Fourth Congress.

The only other two groups existing are essentially foreign imports, with parent bodies that broke away from the Fourth International (or claimed that it had broken away from them) in the United States and Latin America at the time of the "re-unification congress" of 1963, which as its name suggests, produced a split.

More (if you can take it) on all these in forthcoming chapters.



NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW  
BUT...



... SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW!

## Chapter 5

### The SW'P shop

What is IS?

The largest, though not longest-lived, Trotskyist organisation in Britain, the Socialist Workers Party, sets out to confuse students of Trotskyism by not being Trotskyist. Well, it disagrees with one of the fundamental tenets of Trotskyism—the statement that the USSR is a “bureaucratically degenerated workers’ state”. This is a view held by *all* other Trotskyist groups, whether apparently “pro-Soviet” like the Spartacists or rabidly anti-Soviet like the Revolutionary Socialist League (secret name of the core of the Militant Group, which, to be fair to it, is probably bigger than the SWP, but as it doesn’t admit it exists, I’ve given the SWP precedence).

The SWP believes instead that Soviet society represents “state capitalism”, in which the “bureaucracy” has set itself up as a new ruling class which effectively owns the means of production. I shall be examining this remarkable piece of creative development of Marxism later. I am including the SWP in this book because they were born out of the Trotskyist movement and have produced children that have returned to it, and because they agree with Trotsky on all main points other than the above.

To be fair, he even agreed with them on that one for a while (albeit before they existed) before realising that it was too silly; mind you, so do many bourgeois theoreticians, and, for instance, Tito’s critic—from the *right*—Milovan Djilas.

Anyhow, the SWP (the Swups, Swoppers, or even Swurps, as they are affectionately known) acknowledge their debt to Trotsky, are quite happy to endorse "Trotskyist jargon" (their phrase; *Socialist Review*, February 1984, back page, for instance) and even refer to one of their own leading members, admittedly jokingly, as a "former leading Trot" after his defection to Aims of Industry and the SDP.

The SWP's origins in the Labour Party contradict its opposition to that Party; although the refusal to back North Korea against the United States, which caused its birth in 1951, was well in line with the policy of right-wing Labour at the time—with the difference that right-wing Labour *openly* supported Washington, while the SWP (then the IS) policy only *effectively* did so.

The IS, not to be confused with the other IS, the International Secretariat of the Fourth International, thus emblazoned the fence-sitting slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism" on its banners, still to be seen at the masthead of *Socialist Worker*, where it was until recently accompanied by the half price (10p) offer to "unemployed and strikers".

The main inspiration of IS (I'll stick to the initials, because even in the 1960s no-one was ever really sure whether they stood for "International Socialism" or the "International Socialists"—including their members) was drawn from an American Trotskyist by the name of Max Shachtman, who broke with Trotsky in 1938 over the question of "state capitalism", and left the American SWP—not to be confused with the British—to found the short-lived Workers' Party before entering the reformist Socialist Party, eventually winding up in the Congress for Cultural Freedom, unfortunately since exposed as a front for the CIA.

After waiting a dozen years from Shachtman's first attempt (open anti-Sovietism wasn't too popular during the war), Michael Kidron and Tony Cliff began publication of *Socialist Review* in 1951. It was to die in the early 1960s and be reborn in the 1970s as the monthly magazine of the SWP. It was joined meantime by the newspaper *Labour Worker*, a title designed, unlike some of its contents, to encourage support from rank-and-file Labour members and supporters, an aim shared by the title that replaced it in the 1960s, *Socialist Worker*.

By 1968, when I personally first came across the IS, they had come out of the Labour Party, and were acting partially in alliance with the International Marxist Group (also at that time recently emerged into the cold light of non-infiltration of the Labour Party), at least as far as their joint participation in the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign went. IS's main activity at that time appeared to be singing *The Internationale* on demonstrations.

This revolutionary tactic having failed to rouse the masses to revolt, the IS throughout the 1970s began to develop work amongst rank-and-file trade unionists. That phrase, however, meant something different for the IS than it did for others in the trade union movement. "Rank-and-file trade unionist" in IS-ese meant members of IS or readers of *Socialist Worker* formed into tiny groups of people unable to win enough of the confidence of the rank and file in order to gain elective positions in the movement. All the different "rank-and-file" groups demonstrated their genuine roots within the unions by having identical political lines—that of the IS, or, as it became in 1977, the SWP—and identical publications.

The change to party from group had come as a result of Tony Cliff's conviction

that the revolution was on the cards in the years immediately following the workers' victories of 1974. The "National Rank-and-File Movement", formed at a 500-strong (strong?) conference in 1974 was to be "capable of challenging capitalism itself . . . untrammelled by a reformist bureaucracy", according to the reborn *International Socialism* (publication, not group) in 1976. It didn't.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, considering that "our strategy is the building of the national framework of the National Rank-and-File Movement through the Right to Work Campaign", according to Chris Harman at the 1976 IS Conference. As the latter campaign itself never had a real mass base, it's difficult to see how even that openly manipulative aim was to be achieved.

Indeed, many of the leading activists of the Right to Work Campaign—all of them members of IS and SWP, of course—were people with the sort of qualifications so untypical of the 1970s unemployed that they could themselves have found work in the long-gone relative prosperity of its heyday, until they made themselves unemployable by their public antics. Some were silly enough to give up good jobs to become "unemployed activists". They may have lived to regret it.

The SWP did manage to create one movement with something approaching a mass base the Anti-Nazi League. This now effectively defunct body did much good work in exposing the fascism of the National Front and reducing its electoral base to zero, and is probably, with all its shortcomings, the one thing genuinely to the credit of the SWP.

Unfortunately, it got carried away with its own success. And its greatest success was to organise open-air rock concerts. This led to the situation in which a demonstration in Brick Lane could be ignored by the organisers of a simultaneous Rock Against Racism gig—possibly out of fear of the low proportion of the audience who would have considered opposing racism important enough to miss the show.

I personally lost a chance of fame at a Rock Against Racism concert at Bristol University Students' Union. As an occasional agit-prop theatre performer I had been involved in putting on an anti-NF skit, with great success, at, among other places, a thousand-strong picket at an NF local election public meeting. We offered to slip it into the programme at the concert. After much consideration, the organisers told us it would be too difficult to slot in, despite its short duration. Another consideration might have been the fact that it would have fitted in ill with the other groups' contributions—all totally devoid of even the mildest political commitment or content.

With the demise of ANL, and of the "rank-and-file movements"—theoretically all justified by a switch to territorial rather than workplace branches, but actually brought about by the loss of the SWP's tenuous base in industry—the SWP is nowadays at a bit of a loss. Much reduced from its late 1970s claimed membership of 4,000, it is floundering about for some sort of front organisation to give it the sort of credibility it once had.

But at least it has left some children to be remembered by—and even one grandchild in the form of the RCP. One of the SWP's children left home of its own free will in 1972 to become the Revolutionary Communist Group. The SWP might have told it "never darken this door again", had it known that the RCG (coming



up!) already had within its womb its illegitimate child, the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (now grown enough to call itself "Party", but still as politically immature.)

Two groups that did receive the aforementioned stern parental admonition from the SWP (though in its IS days) were Workers Fight and Workers Power. The former had rashly taken IS at its word when the latter proclaimed absolute freedom for the formation of factions within its organisation in line with Trotsky's own position—though as we know, IS wasn't altogether Trotskyist. This was probably a ploy to get factions to come out into the open, which WF (who *were* Trotskyist) did, and were promptly expelled.

They later became the International-Communist League (don't ask me to explain the hyphen) and their publication became *Workers Action*—somebody must have told them that "Workers Fight" had also been the title of an illegal underground paper in the early years of this century which was run by . . . Joseph Stalin! A further transformation has changed their publication to *Socialist Organiser* and themselves into the Socialist Organiser Alliance, through one of the most improbable of mergers. More about them later.

#### Workers Power—not yet disconnected

IS was to spawn again. Its other Trotskyist infant, Workers Power, was born in 1972 as the "left faction" in response to IS's "shameful chauvinist line on Ireland", its "economism" and its rejection of Trotsky's Transitional Programme. It lasted a little longer than its elder sibling, but was finally given the doorstep treatment in 1975. After publishing two issues of *Workers Power*, the group fused with the I-CL. But, as brothers and sisters—even those united in hatred of their parents—will, they soon quarrelled.

WP wanted "to overcome the crisis of direction within the rank and file of the trade unions". The I-CL was more interested in orientating itself towards the Labour Party, described by WP as a "bourgeois workers' party". With such an obvious disagreement, it's difficult to see why two such diametrically contradictory trends of Trotskyism merged in the first place. But it didn't last. In fact, the fusion never really started. All WP members on the I-CL political committee were suspended even *before* their first unity conference, and they quit.

Thus Workers Power was out of IS, into I-CL, and back into the wide world, all between 1975 and 1976—a remarkable achievement. They recommenced publication of *Workers Power* after the termination of their incestuous relationship, and it went monthly in 1978. In the summer of 1983 they brought out the first edition of their theoretical journal, *Permanent Revolution*. More than a year later, the second issue had still not yet appeared. Thus the first may also have been the last, in sad contradiction to the "permanence" of its title.

WP had already put forward some interesting theoretical propositions, one being that the Fourth International is dead. This is not totally original. It is a view shared by the Spartacists and others. Some Trotskyist groups refuse to recognise any of the current Fourth Internationals, presumably on the grounds that none of the Internationals recognise *them*.

WP call for "a workers' government", but make it clear that Parliament has no role in this process, unlike the Socialist Organiser Alliance, who make the same demand but fudge the detail in order to stay in the Labour Party—with typical Trotskyist adherence to principle. WP also put forward an interesting formulation on the nature of Soviet society. Having broken away from IS, they cannot possibly adopt the term "state capitalism"; but they seem to have trouble with the orthodox Trotskyist "deformed" or "degenerated workers state".

Their theoretical journal does include the latter formulation on occasion; but it is far overshadowed by the much more regular use of the expression dropping of the final "d", giving us a "degenerate workers' state". This cannot but conjure up the strange image of a state run by proletarian perverts; and the fact that the term is used pejoratively implies disagreement with the belief of many Trotskyist groups in the "revolutionary" nature of every deviation from the sexual norm (not to be confused with "Our Norm", erstwhile cartoon hero of *Socialist Worker*). The latter publication has itself drawn the line on sexual deviation. A 1978 article by Paul Foot on corporal punishment in schools deviated extensively on the proliferation of pornographic "spanking magazines". While Foot rightly condemned violence as a supposedly erotic form, the page designer managed to illustrate the article with "spanking" headlines and a cover illustration from *Obey*. I was reminded of the Sunday newspapers' cry of "Is this the sort of filth our children should be looking at? See pages 3, 5, 7, 8 & 9").

Still, when you think about it, the idea of a state run by *degenerate* workers is no less silly than the idea of one run by *deformed* workers, and that in any case implies an insult to the disabled. Whether Workers Power will get to develop this interesting concept further is another matter. I've seen their paper only once in the last year (a single seller on a 20,000-strong demonstration), so they may be on the way out. I had earlier seen *Spartacist* (January 1984) launch a diatribe against them, but this need not have been evidence of their continuing existence: the Spartacists' hatred of all other Trotskyist groups may well extend beyond death. And Workers Power's recent pamphlet, "The Road to Working Class Power" gives evidence of a shift towards Labour, so we may yet see them eat their words on the "bourgeois workers' party" and join the other Trotskyist burrowers within it.

#### Fight This, Fight That, Fight The Other

One child of the IS that is definitely still going is the Revolutionary Communist Group. The RCG is Trotskyism's answer to the Shining Light Temple of the Guru Maharaj Ji, at least as far as lifestyle goes. All members, who live in communes, the addresses of which they don't divulge, are given a timetable for each week to which they are expected to adhere rigidly. It only includes a few hours free time each week. RCG members delayed from returning to the commune at the appointed hour are expected to ring home base with a plausible explanation for their absence.

The timetables usually include selling their main publication, *Fight Racism Fight Imperialism*, for several hours each day, often *inside* other people's meetings, to the annoyance of the organisers, who have probably, after all, paid for the meeting room. Another regular activity is speaking at other people's meetings. It was



impossible to go to a single election meeting addressed by Tony Benn in 1979, anywhere in Britain, without members of the RCG (usually the same ones) getting up and asking questions about Ireland. Well, I say "questions", but what these actually comprise are lengthy (often *very* lengthy) statements on to the end of which question marks are conveniently tacked.

These "questions" are always prefaced with the stock statement "I'm so-and-so and I'm a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group and . . .". The problem with this statement is that it is invariably a lie. The name given by an RCG member in the place of my "so-and-so" is never his or her real name, but their "movement name"—although they are usually permitted to keep their own initials in order to retain some sense of personal identity.

Thus I see that "Maxine Williams" is still writing for *FRFI* (to abbreviate their monthly paper's rather silly name), although I in fact knew her many years ago as Maxine Walker (no relation). This sort of unreal existence and the Jesuitical dedication required of RCG members may well explain why, after beginning with a breakaway with a few Brighton-based students from the IS in 1972, the RCG has never grown much beyond the size it was at in 1974, when I asked one of its Bristol members the size of the organisation. "About thirty," she replied. "In Bristol?" I asked. "No, in the country."

This may all also explain the widely-held belief in the ultra-left in Britain that the RCG are run by the Special Branch—a belief for which there is, I must add, no concrete evidence. But if the Branch wanted to gather together young people opposed to repression in Ireland and South Africa, then burn them out in a short space of time (with exceptions like Maxine W) leaving them unfit for any sort of political activity, they couldn't do a better job of it than the RCG are already doing.

The attraction of the RCG lies in the apparently reasonable nature of much of their policies. These have dropped the open anti-Communism and anti-Sovietism of most Trotskyist groups—and indeed, they will tell you that they are *not* Trotskyist—though retaining the anti-labour sentiments of many. The forces of the future, says their March 1984 manifesto "The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain", are not "the reactionary and racist official British labour and trade union movement" but "the youth, the unemployed, the low paid, the millions on the poverty line".

This mirrors the obsession of SWP and others in the 1970s with the unorganised and minority groups which, while they have every right not to be ignored (though at times I bet they wish they could be, at least by the Trotskyist), are unlikely to take on the "vanguard role" assigned to them in the RCG manifesto. But the RCG does identify the forces for progress on a world scale relatively correctly as "those who are fighting imperialism from Asia to Palestine to Central America, those countries that have fought imperialism to establish a revolutionary democracy such as Angola, and those socialist countries free from imperialist exploitation such as the Soviet Union and China."

Many might balk at that inclusion of the Chinese Government in the "forces of progress", and you'll note the absence of any references to the working class, either in capitalist or socialist countries, praised only for having thrown off

imperialism rather than having established workers' power—deformed or otherwise. But the rabid anti-Sovietism of most Trotskyists is notably absent.

Well, it is nowadays, or at least it's better covered up. I well remember an early RCG leaflet advertising a meeting on the USSR which pointed out that whereas under the tsars, Russia used to export grain, it is now importing it. This was presented, in a style indistinguishable from Maggie Thatcher's, as a "failure" of socialism. The inconvenient fact that under the tsars the Russian people starved as their grain went abroad and now they are well fed was omitted.

The RCG's contempt for the labour movement, in contradiction to their apparently reasonable assessment of the world situation, may of course, win to its side many young rebels understandably lacking in experience in that movement—a lack which the RCG will reinforce rather than rectify. But their questions on Tony Benn after his victory at the Chesterfield by-election could well be applied to them:

"Will he use his parliamentary position to defend the Irish people . . . black people . . . to isolate apartheid? By his deeds shall you know him." The RCG clearly has little faith in the deeds past or present of Tony Benn. But if they are assessed on their own deeds, they too are found to be wanting. Their defence of the Irish people largely consists of running small and unrepresentative—other than of themselves—"Irish Solidarity Committees", which blossomed with the first national campaign of the "Irish Solidarity Movement" in January 1984.

Simply calling your organisation a "solidarity movement" isn't the best way to organise solidarity with the Irish people. But winning the labour movement to a position of support for Ireland becomes a bit difficult when, with a membership of thirty-odd, you feel able to airily dismiss a movement of over ten million people as irrelevant.

The RCG's record on "isolating apartheid" is little better—although you have to admit that they put in one hell of a lot of effort for so little positive result. Their control of the City of London branch of the Anti-Apartheid Movement has led them to ignore the advice of both the AAM itself and the African National Congress, whilst representing themselves as the true voice of Anti-Apartheid. This led them, for instance, to call an indefinite hunger strike in 1983 outside the South African Embassy, demanding the release of David Kitson. The inevitable clashes with the police over obstruction, and the fact that few people are prepared to starve to death for a cause, leading to the inevitable collapse of the action, could be of no assistance to a heroic victim of apartheid, finally released in 1984.

The RCG make a habit of trouble with the police. It is absolutely necessary to oppose the gross breaches of democratic rights perpetrated against sellers of their *Hands Off Ireland* in various cities in Britain, but it also has to be said that the RCG appear to relish clashes with the police, and indeed, even to thrive—if the RCG could be called "thriving"—on them.

#### A Tendency to divide

The RCG did thrive, of course, in the sense of giving birth to another group in the form of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, thus giving the latter the distinction of being a breakaway from an organisation of a mere thirty members,



which should be the ultimate in Trotskyist amoeba-splitting—but probably isn't. The RCT's gestation period ended early in 1977 and it's since grown, as children will, to be bigger than its parent—perhaps twice as big.

It has, again as children will, rebelled against that parent—not to mention its grandparent, the SWP. Whilst both its predecessors were guilty of deviations from Trotskyism even to the extent of denying Trotsky three times before cock-crow, the RCT went back to open Trotskyism. While, for instance, on the question of the USSR the SWP goes *beyond* Trotskyism by calling the Soviet Union capitalist and the RCG *retreats* from it by muting its anti-Sovietism, the RCT came out with the hardy perennial of the deformed workers' state.

It does share the RCG's anti-Labourism and contempt for the trade union movement but was clearly unhappy that this contempt was not (publicly) extended to the peace movement and the national liberation movements. It was apparently their demand that the RCG publicly attack the African National Congress of South Africa (presumably they think this an excellent revolutionary demand!) that led to the expulsion of the Tendency from its parent body.

The RCT follows its parent's example, though, in setting up fictitious campaigns on racism and Ireland. Its "Irish Freedom Movement" is distinguishable from the RCG's "Irish Solidarity Movement" only by its middle name, and its "anti-racist" fronts WAR and ELWAR (Workers Against Racism and East London ditto) are notable mainly for their total lack of involvement by the workers they purport to represent. They apparently have another front called SPATC, the significance of which initials I have been unable to uncover.

The current obsession of the group is "preparing for power", on which they've already held a couple of conferences, so they should be fully capable of holding the reins of state power when they seize them—presumably shortly. They are apparently thinking in the short term when they refer to themselves as "The Party of the Future" on their posters.

These posters were plastered all over South London and various other parts of the country when the 1983 general election was contested by the Revolutionary Communist Party, as it had by that time become, not to be confused with the RCP (deceased, 1947) or the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist (formerly Maoist, now pro-Albanian). But if RCP posters were plastered everywhere, RCP voters were not—except in the sense that the tiny number of people who *did* vote for them must have been plastered.

Another major activity of the RCP—apart from losing elections hands down (which doesn't matter as they don't believe in them anyway)—is going on demonstrations carrying large banners declaring that the Malvinas (Falklands) belong to Argentina. Now, I happen to agree with that point, but can't see the purpose of carrying such banners on *every* demonstration, whatever the issue involved. Perhaps it's too subtle for me.

The RCP's monthly paper is cryptically entitled *the next step*, and I haven't forgotten to press the shift key on my typewriter, it really doesn't have capital letters for initials. This isn't a design consideration for the masthead either—it's like that even when printed in the text of an article. Perhaps the refusal to capitalise the paper's name is evidence of a modesty that was notably lacking in the RCP's

mentor Trotsky.

Another tendency uncommon among Trotskyists is sometimes seen in the pages of *the next step*. When the RCT became the RCP in the early 1980s, an article outlining the reasons for the change was headed "A Tendency to Become a Party". The double meaning, I immediately assumed, was quite accidental, and had missed being spotted by a sub-editor as a result of the notorious humourlessness of Trotskyists. But no, on further inspection I've discovered that *tns* often includes, for instance, ironic, satirical and even *witty* photograph captions. So apparently they actually have a sense of humour. Not only that, but one article recently spoke of the RCP having "a much better social life these days". Good for them! They may be barmy, but at least they enjoy themselves.

### Science Fiction?

Stop press! The RCP has just got a new uncle—or possibly aunt. It's a well-known fact that aunts and uncles need not necessarily be older than nieces and nephews, and accordingly the SWP has just given birth to a group calling itself the Socialist Federation. Little is known as yet of this, the SWP's fourth child, and it may turn out to have been still-born, just as its third child, Workers Power, may have died before reaching the age of ten.

The Federation was formed at a conference of sixty ex-members of the SWP in Bradford in February 1984. Its formation followed the expulsion the previous July of six members of Bradford SWP, some at least of whom appear to have some industrial basis. This fact renders improbable the accusation made against them by the leadership of being "secret members of the RCP". They appear to be more interested in a return to the 1970s image of the SWP.

They are also capable, if what the Bradford expellees claim the SWP accused them of is true, of a remarkable feat of political telepathy—aptly enough for a group called (initially) SF. The accusation was that they formed "a subconscious faction". Myself lacking any similar super-scientific or clairvoyant skills, I can't say whether they'll still be around by the time you read this.



D.

LABOUR  
CO-OPERATIVE  
FARM  
FOUNDER:  
J. KEIR HARDIE

THE "ENTRYIST" TACTIC WAS ELABORATED  
PRECISELY BECAUSE OF A COMBINATION OF  
CIRCUMSTANCES NEVER EXPERIENCED BY  
REVOLUTIONARY MARXISTS IN THE PAST:  
THEY EXISTED IN EXTREMELY SMALL  
NUMBERS—Pierre Frank, Trotsky's for-  
mer private secretary, 1969.

THE LABOUR PARTY?  
A CORPSE... A THOROUGHLY  
BOURGEOIS PROP OF  
CAPITALISM—Tariq  
Ali, 1972.

THAT THE LABOUR PARTY, CREATED AS A BARRIER TO COMMUNISM,  
CAN UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNIST  
[TROTSKYIST] PARTY IS TRUE, BUT ONLY UNDER THE CONDITION  
THAT WE CONSIDER THE LABOUR PARTY NOT AS "OUR" PARTY BUT AS  
AN ARENA IN WHICH WE ARE ACTING AS AN ABSOLUTELY INDEPENDENT  
PARTY—Trotsky, May, 1932.

## Chapter 6

### An epidemic of enteritis

#### The thoroughly entrism Millies

What is probably the largest Trotskyist group in Britain—the Revolutionary Socialist League—has the disadvantage that it doesn't exist. That is, all its members deny its existence, and maybe some of them don't even know it exists themselves. The RSL is in fact the secret core of the Militant Tendency, the most influential and publicised Trotskyist group in Britain and the main practitioner of "entryism" in the Labour Party.

This policy, advocated by Trotsky in 1934 (and opposed by him at other times), also known as "entrism" and "enterism", has as its aim the building of Trotskyist groups into something more substantial by operating within larger, reformist, parties. As the tactic was intended only for very small grouplets, it was consequently dominant throughout the Fourth International in the first post-war decades; and nowhere more than in Britain, where Ted Grant, leading light of the Militant Tendency, has been its foremost practitioner for getting on for three decades.

After his expulsion from the Fourth International in 1951, when it was still in league with Gerry Healy, Ted Grant floundered for a while in "International Socialist" until his big chance came later in the 1950s when Fourth International leader Michael Pablo discovered that he didn't have an official section in Britain. He decided to set one up by . . . placing an advert in *Tribune*! Ted Grant answered this, and thus became the first ever mail order Trotskyist in history. Though not



quite. Perhaps his letter got lost in the post, or he forgot to stamp it (being a post office worker at the time he should have known better) because Grant's group never did become the official British section.

Actually, the reason was that the 1953 International split had resulted in Pablo's departure, with his former ally Ernest Mandel taking over again. It was sixteen years before Mandel felt able, presumably in desperation, to endorse an official British Section in the form of the International Marxist Group. Meanwhile, Grant had reconstituted the Revolutionary Socialist League, and was irregularly publishing a journal called *Socialist Fight*, which gave up the ghost in 1963 to pave the way for the first appearance, as a four-page monthly, of his *Militant* in 1964.

The lengthy period of secret entryism of Grant and his followers was able to give the impression that this was a paper actually born of the Labour Party. Indeed, both Grant's small band and the *Militant* have grown greatly in size and influence, the paper looking set to be able to relaunch itself as a daily before long. But the growing support for the Militant Tendency does not alter the fact that at its heart is a conspiracy practising an organised hypocrisy of staggering proportions, even for Trotskyists.

When Ted Grant read the Communist Manifesto (I'm assuming he *has*), he clearly missed the bit that says: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims". But then, Ted Grant isn't a communist, he's a Trotskyist, and that entails the occasional use of what Churchill called "a terminological inexactitude". Whatever you think of Lord Underhill and his report, and the intentions of the right of the Labour Party in purging the editorial board of *Militant*, it's undeniable that the RSL exists as a secret party within the Labour Party and is in breach of Labour Party rule. Thus its members have little choice but to lie about their actual affiliations.

And what makes Grant's squeals of "witch-hunt" even less credible is the fact that when rival Trotskyist Gerry Healy's supporters were removed from the Young Socialists in the early 1960s, (though with typical Healyite disregard for reality they retain the YS title even to this day), Ted Grant was one of the most vocal supporters of the purge.

The latest "witch-hunt", quite apart from the fact that some of the "witches" have had a pretty good case made against them, is hardly up to Salem proportions. After the initial editorial board expulsions and a few such as in Blackburn, *Militant* continues unmolested, and has a significant presence in perhaps seventy constituency Labour Parties. In many ways its existence seems quite welcome to the right wing, who are able to use its Trotskyist antics as a stick to beat the whole left. The ruling class's appreciation of the "revolutionary" nature of *Militant* was shown when *The Times* gave its editor Peter Taaffe 28 whole column inches to put his case on June 23, 1982. *Militant* also received a free 15 minute party political broadcast in the form of a half share in Channel 4's "Diverse Reports"—which could have been scripted by Taaffe and Grant, so uncritical was it.

The RSL has had a number of successes recently, such as in local elections and within the trade union movement. One of these was the 2,500-strong "conference" of the Broad Left Organising Committee (a democratic gathering at which all dissent from the *Militant* line was kept from the microphone). *Militant*, of course,

deny that the BLOC is a front for their organisation, and with some justification, even though perhaps a third of the delegates were "Militant supporters".

Surprisingly enough, when BLOC was discussed on Bristol Trades Union Council in March 1984, the proposer of a motion to send delegates moved formally. He didn't really know the arguments; the motion had been moved in his branch by someone unable to attend through Labour Party commitments—local *Militant* full-timer Brian Beckingham. The seconder to the (unsuccessful) motion in the trades council was also—surprise, surprise—a "Militant supporter". The third speaker, in a show of entrust solidarity, was a member of the "Socialist League" (International Marxist Group). No doubt this same scene was re-enacted at trades councils around the country.

Not that there weren't any "real workers" at the BLOC event. At least one-third of the delegates had no connection with Trotskyist groups—and probably no idea that Trotskyist groups were doing their best to manipulate them. Indeed, as far as *Militant* goes, the same probably applies to the majority of its supporters. The four thousand supporters claimed within the Labour Party by the paper probably have, for the most part, little knowledge of the existence of the RSL, an inner sanctum into which only a minority of those attending "Militant readers' meetings" are admitted.

Nobody's even met a self-confessed member of the RSL; I have, however, met a few ex-members. But you can bet that at least the hundred-plus (count 'em!) full-time workers employed by the "Tendency"—that's more than the number of full-time agents employed by the entire Labour Party—are members. There's a simple test: take the name of God in vain. Mentioning the RSL in the presence of one of its members is rather like saying "Jehovah" out loud in ancient Israel.

I was once engaged on a debate, on behalf of the Young Communist League, with the Labour Party Young Socialists. We had asked, instead, for a discussion on practical united action in order to advance the cause of young workers and school students, but the LPYS's local *Militant* leadership preferred negative debates to that boringly positive idea. My opponent was Andy Bevan, later to become the Labour Party's national youth officer. After several Trotskyist interventions from the far from exclusively Trotskyist audience, I queried the appropriateness of such revolutionary-sounding views in a reformist party. If I felt that way, I suggested, I'd want to form a specifically revolutionary party: "You could call it anything . . . say, for instance the . . . er, Revolutionary Socialist League", I apparently spontaneously improvised.

My little private joke (I know it was a bit sectarian, but the insane ultra-leftism of some present had got me needed) was lost on non-RSL members present—and the RSL members didn't find it funny. You could tell them by the immediate flash of hatred in their eyes for one who had dared take the Sacred Name in vain. Andy Bevan was lifted several inches from his seat, and looked set to assault me physically. It's a good job they don't have stonings of blasphemers any more, and it's a good job that Andy Bevan's a lot smaller than me.

The problem is that to the many non-RSL young people present, the RSL entrusts appear to simply be left-wingers fighting the absolutely necessary fight against the dominant reformist ideology of the right-wing Labour leadership, as indeed they do



to many militant (not *Militant*) members of the Labour and trade union movement. Ultra-leftism is, as Lenin commented, the price that we pay for that right-wing reformism—which even makes some of the wrongheaded ideas of Trotskyism look good.

And while I think the *Militant* conspiracy have got a cheek to protest against witch-hunts (after all, the RSL leaders are straight out of the first scene of *Macbeth*), the right-wing of Labour are just as guilty of breach of the constitution and deserve the same treatment. The founders of the “Council for Social Democracy” should have been thrown out before they got the chance to make a heroic exit and found the SDP. The eleven trade union and Labour leaders who held a semi-secret meeting in February 1981 to plot the reversal of democratically decided progressive changes in party policy and organisation were just as guilty of conspiracy as the editorial board of *Militant*.

*Militant* would, of course, claim that it indeed does disdain to conceal its views and aims. They do regularly regale us with their demand for the nationalisation of the top 236½ monopolies, or whatever the current number is. This is included in the list of eighteen points enumerated in the Tendency’s “What We Stand For”. These points fail to include a single reference to the internationalism that is obligatory for all Trotskyists—and of course for all sincere socialists. This ties in with the remarkable nationalism of *Militant*. Its supporters go in for a variety of “left” chauvinism that leads them to see the world’s workers as waiting for a British example of socialism, which “What We Stand For” describes as “a beacon” for the workers of France, Greece and Spain among others.

Indeed, the presumably RSL-led Revolution (though they try to avoid that unpleasantly un-Labour word) in Britain, we are told, will lead not only to the collapse of capitalism throughout western Europe, but also “of the rotting Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and in Russia.” If only we’d know they were all waiting on us!

*Militant*’s nationalism also leads its supporters into a position of Ireland at odds with those of every other Trotskyist grouping, a position compounded by the admixture of “Labour chauvinism”. This leads them to a contempt for any movement—or even individual—outside the Labour and trade union movement. I remember the aforementioned Brian Beckingham, at a meeting organising an anti-racist committee, rejecting the involvement of anyone outside that movement, including in particular, “vicars”—a word spat rather than spoken.

No doubt *Militant* would have been in favour of removing Monsignor Bruce Kent from the leadership of CND—if that were an organisation for which they had anything other than contempt. It’s a sad but true fact of life that on issues such as race and peace, the labour movement is often left standing by the efforts of just such vicars. But then, “facts of life” were never a subject to which Trotskyists ever paid much attention.

There are a number of other areas in which *Militant* is outstandingly sectarian and divorced from reality (if they were ever married) and I’ll deal with some of them later. But, you might say, in 1984 they were facing up to a very unpleasant reality—the Tory Government’s attack on local government—in Liverpool, where they have managed to achieve significant influence in the ruling Labour group on

the City Council, which increased its majority at the local elections in May 1984.

There is no question who is the villain of the piece in the Liverpool case: the Conservative Government, which quite deliberately starved the city of resources and forced it to face an impossible choice between cuts in services—and jobs—and massive increases in rates. But some of the tactics of *Militant*’s supporters have been far from calculated to take the struggle forward.

For instance, deputy leader Derek Hatton (we never see non-*Militant* council leader John Hamilton) was claiming before the May elections that these would be a referendum on the Labour group’s proposed “illegal” budget. After the election, and doubtless before, he described the Liberals as “just another Tory Party”—a statement not wholly without justification, particularly as far as the Liberal leadership goes. But on those grounds, Cllr Hatton has sadly little basis for calling his “referendum” a success, because the “two Tory Parties” between them got more votes than Labour.

Now that’s not a fact that I’m gloating over. I’d far sooner have seen a more decisive victory for Labour in Liverpool, *Militant* or no *Militant*. But with Labour’s increased majority of seats being won by a *reduced* share of the votes, it’s strange to see Cllr Hatton’s jubilation over a “referendum” in which, on his own terms, he was on the losing side, and in which many doubtless voted Labour despite, not because of, *Militant*’s policies. And it might give him some pause in which to consider the possibility of reconsidering tactics.

Not a bit of it. His first contribution to a debate with other left Labour council leaders in the May/June 1984 *New Socialist* was: “Well we are not going to compromise.” The problem was that you got the impression that the people with whom “we” were not going to compromise were not so much the Tory Government as the other hard-hit Labour councils.

Many Labour council leaders saw 1985 as the year for a confrontation between local and national government. That’s the year when rate-capping begins to take effect, and when opposition to the Government can be mobilised on a nation-wide basis. Cllr Hatton preferred the idea of unity with his own council firmly at the head. A confrontation in 1984 was described by him as “a beacon to the rest of the country”; a phrase he borrowed from “What We Stand For”, though from its section on Britain leading Europe rather than Liverpool leading Britain, as, curiously enough, the guidebook’s 29 pages contain not one word on local government.

The problem is that a Liverpool/Westminster clash might *not* be that beacon. And a defeat would weaken the forces that could have united in a national struggle. Liverpool going alone would be a recipe for defeat, and as Cllr Hatton told other Labour leaders, “we have got to accept that Liverpool is going into this confrontation,” and by *we* he meant *you*. His view is that the nation can be united behind Liverpool in the event of commissioners going in to take over the city, which “will create a spark which will ignite fires [presumably beacons—DW] in the rest of the country.”

But as David Blunkett, the blind leader of Sheffield City Council, asked, “if you were Patrick Jenkin . . . why shouldn’t you let Liverpool dangle slowly in the wind?” A possible outcome was that Liverpool would be allowed to become bankrupt and chaotic, so that an eventual entry of commissioners would be, if not welcome,



accepted reluctantly and with a sense of almost relief; certainly not a scenario for a united national fight.

In the event, reality temporarily imposed itself on Cllr Hatton, and a temporary compromise was, in his eyes no doubt regrettably, reached. His previously stated unwillingness to come to a compromise not with the Tories but with Blunkett seemed to me a case of the politically blind refusing to be led by the much farther-sighted physically blind; and *Militant's* aim of Liverpool as a "beacon" was more a case of a Trotsky-style "grand gesture" (as at Brest Litovsk) than a serious attempt at defeating the enemy.

It's easy, of course, to be critical when you're not sitting in Cllr Hatton's seat (or that of his theoretical boss). But he's still in it, and as I write the storm is beginning to brew over rate-capping. By now you may have seen the outcome of that fight. I hope the "no compromise" stand of Cllr Hatton remains dropped, and makes a united front of local authorities against the Tory Government possible. Even had Liverpool gone it alone, for all my disapproval of *Militant* I couldn't have welcomed a defeat; for it would have been a defeat for the people of Liverpool and ultimately of Britain. That could have been the result of failing to learn from Lenin that permanent refusal to compromise, especially with potential allies, is nonsense.

Footnote for students of *Militant* on the question of Parliament. Nellism is not a jargon term for a particular "parliamentary" strand of Trotskyism: *Nellist* is a surname, not a label.

"Today, Bullington Road, Oxford; tomorrow . . ." (IMG [officials])

The second most important outbreak of *enteritis trotskyitis* in the Labour Party did not occur until 1982 with the formation of the Socialist League. This is a name with historic labour movement associations, and William Morris and Eleanor Marx (Socialist League, 1880s) must be turning in their graves, not to mention Sir Stafford Cripps of somewhat more ill repute (Socialist League, 1930s). But in reality, it's our old friends the International Marxist Group finally going back into the closet (by which I mean not the Labour Party but deep entryism into it.)

This same group had been deep entrists in the Labour Party back in the 'fifties and early-sixties. They coalesced in 1964 around the journal *The Week*, which despite its name actually lasted a few years. Their growing disillusionment with work in the Labour Party (compare their current public profession of absolute faith in it) led them to be attracted to the student movement—where most of their couple of hundred members already were in any case—and back into open appearance as the IMG on the crest of the 1968 revolutionary wave.

Their leading lights at the time included Robin Blackburn, one of the theoreticians of "Red Bases". This was a reference to the centres of armed revolutionary insurrection amongst the peasantry during the Chinese Revolution. There being a slight shortage of peasants in Britain, the IMG, and the Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation in which they participated, hit on students as the next best thing.

The most prominent IMG leader, though, was Tariq Ali, a son of one of the richest landowning families in Pakistan, who had been president of the Oxford

Union. But you'd be mistaken if you thought that was anything to do with campaigning on behalf of the National Union of Students; the Oxford Union is nothing to do with the NUS, but is in fact an upper- and middle-class establishment debating club—rather like, some might say, the IMG. Indeed, I was (I think reliably) informed by an IMG member in the late 1960s that it was necessary to pass a written examination in Marxism to join the Group—further evidence of its intellectual image, which, after the end of the student revolt and the massive Vietnam campaigns, it was to do its best to lose, never very successfully.

In the 1970s, Mike Banda, in a Workers Revolutionary Party pamphlet, described the IMG as "a collection of middle-class adventurers and publicity-seeking opportunists and liberals", which had a grain of truth in it. (I don't often agree with the WRP). But he was wrong to accuse them of not being Trotskyist; he certainly knows that they were officially recognised by Ernest Mandel's Paris-based Fourth International in 1969 (actually that's a proof of non-Trotskyism in the WRP's book).

The publications of the IMG have changed with circumstances and tactics. For such a "trendy" organisation—second only to the SWP—they surprisingly chose, as they have for their current organisational manifestation, a relic from Victorian days as the first title for their paper: *Black Dwarf*. This was a title calculated to encourage deeper study—or perhaps just to confuse and amaze. Its first issue amazed everybody by never appearing. Its front cover photomontage of Enoch Powell in an SS uniform had fallen foul of the libel laws.

Slightly less silly was the second title: *Red Mole*. This was either a remarkable prediction of the 1983 scandal over IMG "entrists" in industry, or, more likely, based on Marx's reference to revolution as an "old mole" burrowing away under the surface. The IMG were saved the silliness of this title in 1976 when its publication went weekly, thus becoming *Red Weekly*, if only for a year until its supersession by *Socialist Challenge*.

Ali, editor of the three predecessors, described *Socialist Challenge* as a "non-sectarian popular political weekly". This was not simply a ploy to get other Trotskyists to help the IMG sell it. It fitted in with the re-orientation of the Group back towards the Labour Party, which had been evident since the mid-1970s with the ebb of the student revolt. It also corresponded to the slight reassessment being made of the immediate arrival of the revolution epitomised by the title of Ali's earlier (1972) work, "The Coming British Revolution".

Then he had referred to the Labour Party as "a corpse", and a "thoroughly bourgeois prop of capitalism", a tune he's since changed somewhat. According to the IMG in 1975, however, "the Labour Party is the most immediate decisive fact in the most important sections of the working class". This does not mean, of course that this was a consciousness shared by the superior members of the IMG.

Neither, unfortunately, did it mean the adoption of a realistic and honest approach to those "important sections" or to the Labour Party itself. What it *did* mean was that by the time *Socialist Challenge* came out, the IMG had already swung back to a policy of Labour Party entryism and sent about half its members in. Their instructions were, if asked whether they were members of the IMG, to deny it (with typical Trotskyist adherence to principle) but say that they were "supporters of *Socialist Challenge*".



Four years later, in 1981, Ali was himself to join the Labour Party amid much wrangling and not totally unjustified complaints from Labour's national executive. His main political activity since seems to be writing letters to *The Guardian* denying his membership of IMG and stressing his commitment to Labour. But as that "commitment" sounds remarkably like the IMG's 1975 statement on Labour, and having seen so many long-standing IMGers suddenly surfacing as staunch Labour Party members, I'm forced to feel that the gentleman doth protest too much, and we all have the right to a pinch of salt.

The IMG's "outrists" finally went the whole hog in 1982 by dissolving the organisation, going into Labour to give birth to the Socialist League and changing *Socialist Challenge* to *Socialist Action*. Fitting in with the IMG's middle-class image, this is the most expensive Trotskyist paper on the market, at 30p for a mere twelve pages. It also appears to be in breach of the Labour Party's rules on foreign connections: "Socialist" in its masthead is written in imitation of "Solidarnosc", complete with emerging flag, so perhaps it's in receipt of funds from Mr Lech Walesa's considerable western bank accounts. (Obviously not, really; after all, there's enough in those accounts to allow them to *give away* a 20-page daily!)

The public, and indeed the great majority of the Labour Party, having failed to hear of the wonderful new Socialist League, its leaders hit on the brilliant ploy of attracting attention by spreading their entryism to CND and British Leyland in 1983 in such an obvious way as could not be missed. They did this by blatantly organising the operation from one house in Bullington Road, Oxford. Maybe I've got it wrong. Maybe they actually believed that nobody would notice the fact that all the people popping up everywhere as activists could be traced back to the SL's Oxford branch. Surely even they aren't that stupid? Maybe they thought other people *were*.

The factionalism operated by the Socialist League within other organisations may have met with little success, but it flourishes *within* the organisation, as in its IMG days. It is the only Trotskyist group that seems to genuinely adhere to support for the right to form factional groupings within a party. Of course, at times Trotsky claimed to be opposed to factionalism; this was usually at the times when he was most deeply engaged in it. Other contemporary groupings' ostensible toleration of factionalism is often simply a ploy to get those opposed to the leadership to pop their heads up over the battlements and make themselves easier targets.

But there exist within the Socialist League no less than fifteen separate groupings, which must make their average membership fairly minute. Some argue in favour of more concentration on trade union work, others on Labour Party work—the latter clearly currently being in the ascendancy. One faction was organised around the demand for the ending of backing for Cuba (IMG long had a soft spot for that heroic island, and in the old days Ali's friends could often be seen with Guevara berets and beards—though not his cigar; in Britain, that would have been a dead giveaway as to their class origins) after Fidel Castro lent his support to Martial Law in Poland in 1982.

Other factions organise around particular individuals. For instance, a group around one Celia Pugh in 1982 tried to win her the editorship of *Socialist Challenge*, but failed. This sort of internecine activity may have been dampened since 100

per cent entryism in that year; more likely the increased secrecy and paranoia involved has increased it. Perhaps we shall see factions eventually banned even in the Socialist League; but how you can exercise discipline in an organisation that (theoretically at least) doesn't exist is beyond me.

## SO—A marriage of convenience

I don't know whether the third entrust group—the Socialist Organiser Alliance—allows factions within its ranks; it's probably too small. Indeed, the only reason I can see for the formation of the Alliance is to maintain a membership of at least a couple of hundred. The wedding took place in 1982, when the International-Communist League—formerly the expelled Workers Fight faction of IS, and Labour Party entrists after their break-up with Workers Power in 1976—was joined by the remains (limited) of Alan Thornett's Workers Socialist League, formed after Thornett had been expelled from the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1974.

Now the strange thing about the alliance is that these two groupings represent totally contradictory strands within Trotskyism—strange except for the fact that Trotsky himself was always prepared to get his allies wherever he could find them (except among the ranks of serious revolutionaries).

Now, by serious, I don't mean the humourless fanaticism of the WRP or the Spartacists (see next chapter). Yet it was precisely from the WRP that the WSL had emerged—definitely the socially and culturally conservative wing of Trotskyism—and then joined up with the I-CL, definitely more at home in the trendy trot milieu of the SWP (despite their deviation towards orthodox Trotskyism).

If the "cultural revolutionaries" of the I-CL won out in the end, it was probably for two reasons: one, the WSL had dwindled so much that it had to merge with *somebody* (anybody!) or die; and two, for the I-CL, the choice was either to find somebody to team up with or just end up as IMG's sixteenth faction. The latter course was clearly far too ignominious a confession of failure.

The result is an organisation and a paper in many ways indistinguishable from the Socialist League and *Socialist Action* other than in not being the Fourth International's official British section—and the SL can hardly go publicly bragging about that nowadays, can they? So *Socialist Organiser*, the paper that replaced I-CL's *Workers Action* (nee *Workers Fight*) and WSL's *Socialist Press* (already effectively defunct), is in many ways a carbon copy of *Solidarnosc Action*, as I find it difficult not to call it.

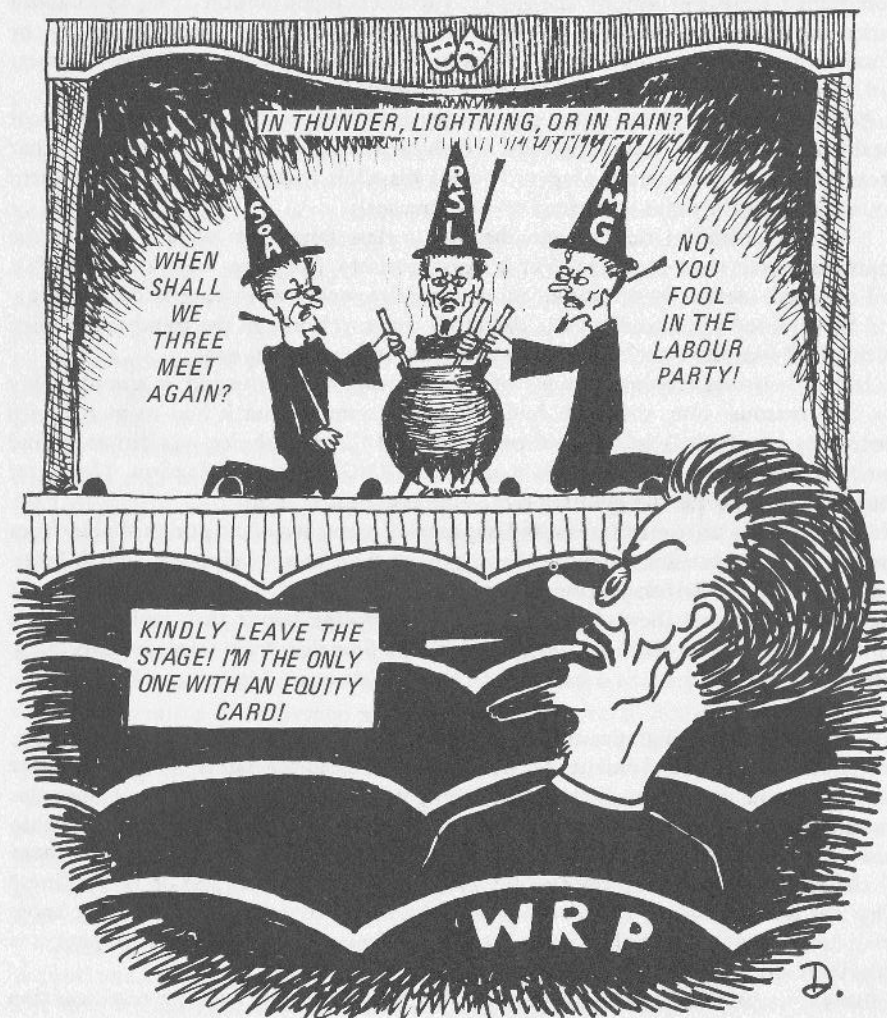
It does have one big advantage: it's cheaper and bigger—sixteen pages for 25p. Better still, if you're a claimant or a striker, its masthead proclaims, like the *Socialist Worker* of old, it's yours for a mere 10p. I've never quite worked out how this system operates. Do you have to show your UB40 signing-on card, or membership card of a known striking union, to claim your discount? Not everyone carries them all the time. Or are the discounts only available in dole queues and on picket lines? Why not try demanding the discount without any such evidence? You never know your luck. Personally, I think the cut-price offer emblazoned on some papers is only there because it *looks good*.

Both groups share the same comfortable anti-Sovietism and the same caution



not to say anything *too* strong about the Labour Party for fear of losing their niche in it. *Socialist Organiser* does seem to concentrate more on youth and more on gay rights than does *Socialist Action*, though the latter's supporters might dispute this. *SO* also seems to spend more time campaigning for an end to "witch-hunts", although nobody actually seems to have noticed their efforts at disruption in the CND and limited influence within the Labour Party Young Socialists enough to have considered their particular brand of witchcraft as *worth* hunting down.

But they keep trying. Perhaps they'll end up in alliance with the Socialist League, or one or another set of circumstances will find them once again out in the cold world of non-entrust Trotskyism—to which we return in the next chapter.



## Chapter 7

### The outside left

Friends, Trotskyists, countrymen!

We now come to the oldest Trotskyist group in Britain: the Workers Revolutionary Party. That statement is not contradicted by the fact that the Party was officially formed in 1973, because prior to that it was the Socialist Labour League, before which it had a period of Labour Party entryism, following on its existence as the Revolutionary Communist Party back in the 'forties, (not to be confused with the Revolutionary Communist Party in the 'eighties) and the Workers International League even earlier.

What all these organisations have in common can be expressed in two words: Gerry Healy. Expelled from the Communist Party in 1936, Healy has since built up his reputation as the Grand Old Man of British Trotskyism—and over nearly fifty years that's some achievement, particularly as six months in one Trotskyist group often entitles you to refer to yourself as a veteran of the movement.

The WRP, however, is better known these days (if it is known at all) as the party of Vanessa Redgrave and various other well-known actors and actresses; it's usually a safe bet that the posher the accent of someone you see on the telly, the greater the chances of their being a member of the WRP. Frances de la Tour, of "Rising Damp" fame, for instance, is an active member of the WRP; another supporter, in 1984 seen playing Stalin on the West End Stage and the vicious capitalist Bradley Hardacre in "Brass" on television, is Timothy West, whose wife Prunella Scales (Sybil Fawltly) was joined by Omar Sharif (the well-known Soviet dissident

Dr Zhivago plus Che Guevara, to name only two of his film roles) as an opener of 1983 Christmas bazaars to raise funds for the WRP's daily paper, the *News Line*.

*News Line*, the only Trotskyist daily paper in Britain—unless *Militant* has gone daily by the time you read this—was preceded by the five-days-a-week *Workers Press*, itself preceded in the 'sixties by the twice weekly *Newsletter*. *News Line* is an exceptionally well-produced paper, and much of it reads like the *Daily Mirror*, or indeed like a Labour Party-TUC daily might read if those two organisations ever faced up to the crying need for such a paper. But it is peppered with feature articles and statements by the WRP political committee so totally at variance with the relatively down-to-earth nature of the news coverage as to make you think you're reading two papers at once.

There is a surprisingly widespread rumour that the *News Line* is in fact funded by Libya's Colonel Gaddafi—the basis of which appears to be its sympathetic treatment of the Libyan Government and the fact that, as it costs a fortune to produce, the money must come from somewhere. I'm not going to be so foolish as to subscribe to such a rumour in print—*Private Eye* published a similar claim about Ken Livingstone's *Labour Herald*, only to end up paying an undisclosed amount (believed to be £100,000) in an out-of-court libel settlement. Besides, I don't actually believe it. Despite its sympathetic treatment of Gaddafi (and I myself don't subscribe to the view of Libya as an insane despotism), the *News Line* was backing a different faction to that supported by the Libyan leader when the tragic warfare was raging within the PLO in Lebanon. As to the money, the WRP has quite enough wealthy members (and its fundraising methods are quite merciless) to be able to fund even a brightly-coloured daily like the *News Line*.

None of this, though, prevents *Socialist Organiser* from referring to *News Line* as a "despicable Gaddafyite rag"—nor does it prevent *News Line* from retaliating by referring to the other paper as "the ultra-revisionist weekly". The reason isn't far to seek: one of the constituent parts of the Socialist Organiser Alliance is what used to be the Workers Socialist League, a breakaway from the WRP.

And it's interesting to note, in reference to attacks on other publications, that when the *Daily Worker* changed its name to the *Morning Star* in 1966, no-one was more vituperative in their condemnation of this as an opportunistic betrayal than *The Newsletter* (though I wasn't too happy about it myself). This criticism, though, is nowadays rarely voiced by the WRP since the change of name of the *Workers Press* to the *News Line* in 1976. And while we're on the *Morning Star*, I was surprised to find the WRP actually backing the Communist Party executive committee in the row between it and the *Star's* formal owners, the People's Press Publishing Society, even to the extent of leafletting PPPS membership meetings in support of the Party executive. With friends like that . . .

But back to origins. After the temporary post-war Trotskyist unity and a period of Labour Party entryism, the Socialist Labour League was formed in February 1959—some two years after its paper, *The Newsletter*, had begun publication, rather than the other way about. *The Newsletter*, as with other publications associated with Gerry Healy, initially denied any specific political affiliations, even when Healy himself was brought on to its editorial board in December 1958 (which was a dead giveaway—who else would invite him but himself?)

However, Healy had not altogether been cured of enteritis; he sent his youthful disciples into the Labour Party's youth group, the Young Socialists, and by determined work they managed to gain not merely a foothold but a stranglehold. This was a remarkable success, as it followed the failure of the SLL's application for affiliation to the Labour Party "on the same basis as the Fabian Society"—a basis you might have expected to stick in the craw of such "revolutionary" thinkers.

Healy's boys and girls in Hendon and Wembley North Young Socialists began publication of *Keep Left* in 1960; it was to become the semi-official publication of the national organisation, despite the 1961 YS conference agreement to an investigation into it. Explosions of a few Healyite YS members were to take place through 1962 to 1964, during which latter year *Keep Left* was to call on the battling mods and rockers of the seaside Eastertime to "unite to fight the Tories"—surely the WRP's only attempt ever to latch on to the "lifestyleism" so beloved of the IMG and SWP.

After more explosions in 1965, the controlling Healyite group within the YS decided that enough was enough, and "came out"—though two decades later, their remnants still call themselves the Young Socialists. The Labour Party reorganised its youth section as the LPYS in 1965, only to see it taken over within five years by a rival band of Trotskyists, this time with apparent impunity. *Keep Left* is still going, though retitled *Young Socialist*, not to be confused with *Socialist Youth* (LPYS, successor to *Left*). Indeed, the Healyite YS seems not to have noticed any change since 1965: its 1984 conference (and general beano) in April 1984 was described as its "25th Annual Conference" (thus putting the first in 1960, meaning either that they've forgotten they're not in the Labour Party or that they admit to never really having been part of it).

The only real advance made since then by Healy's YS is that instead of holding five-a-side football tournaments they now go for the full eleven—but that doesn't reflect any increase in their membership. What they have also done, despite a large decline in membership, is to set up education centres in half a dozen towns around Britain. These have in the past been condemned as brainwashing headquarters; nowadays they are more like skill centres. Now I'm not going to condemn someone for giving unemployed young people basic training in a number of skills; but when this is little more than a front (albeit an expensive one in terms of both cash and effort) for sectarian Trotskyist propaganda, that's another matter.

And it's a little strange coming from a group that (rightly) condemns the Youth Training Scheme to set up its own in opposition, especially as its own ulterior motives are hardly less transparent than those of the Manpower Services Commission.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, formed in 1973 in a welcome change from the appallingly opportunist title Socialist Labour League, has declined from its peak membership of over 1,000 to perhaps five hundred, and is no longer the leading Trotskyist group in Britain that it once was. But it maintains its existence on the basis of a "revolutionary" ardour that suggests that the revolution is just around the corner (which is why its members, other than the looniest, rarely last beyond six months when they find the revolution hasn't yet happened) and on the basis of an iron discipline that makes the RCG look like liberals (which, some would say,



isn't difficult).

Their current view of Britain is that Margaret Thatcher has set up a "bonapartist dictatorship". Now, during the miners' strike, current as I write, you could make out a good case for there being something approaching a police state in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, at least as far as NUM pickets go, but the WRP's suggestion of the existence of a nationwide fascist dictatorship looks rather like projecting a possible future on to the present and claiming it's already arrived—a common feature of Trotskyism.

And I certainly have to plead ignorance as far as "bonapartism" goes: I always assumed that it was a reference to the final destruction of the democratic ideals of the French Revolution by Napoleon I, but I was wrong. I am indebted to the *News Line* for informing me that it actually refers to the dictatorship set up many decades later by Napoleon III. Sadly, for most readers of *News Line*, this information would have been fairly useless, as they didn't bother to explain who Napoleon III was.

But the WRP has a response to Thatcher's "bonapartist" state: we must set up "community councils". The *News Line* began proposing these from the very outset of the miners' strike, and the idea of setting up local organisations to involve the entire community in the struggle of the miners certainly sounds reasonable. But when they'd been pushing the line for over a month, a *News Line* editorial finally let the cat out of the bag by referring to these "community councils" as "Soviet-type organisations".

Now I'm the last person to denigrate the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils that took power in the Russian Revolution of 1917, despite the fact that the development of the world situation and the international balance of class forces in the decades since has meant that particular method of establishing working-class state power is no longer exclusively correct as it then was. But the real insult to the workers—either in Russia in 1917 or in Britain today—comes from those who advocate setting up of "community councils" for one reason whilst keeping the real reason relatively under wraps. No doubt the WRP feels that once these councils are set up (which, sadly, they seem unlikely to be, for all the unity of the miners' communities behind them) they will be easy meat for the WRP. They wouldn't.

### Pop goes the Weasel

It was, however, the question of the iron discipline within the WRP that led to the loss of its few industrial militants with the formation of the Workers Socialist League in 1977, rather than any real political disagreements. I have searched all 159 pages of "The Battle for Trotskyism"—the self-justification of the WSL—in vain for a single political difference with the WRP. Mind you, this collection of boring and irrelevant documents is neither unique nor a record; the WRP itself brought out a four-volume (nearly 1,500 pages all told) collection of documents entitled "Trotskyism Versus Revisionism" on the history of Gerry Healy's disagreements with Michael Pablo, as if anyone cared.

The main issue leading to the defection of the WSL (known in the eight years of its existence as the Weasel, for obvious initial reasons) appears to have been the

personal dictatorship of Gerry Healy within the WRP and his refusal to accept the development of any alternative centres of leadership, real or—usually—imagined. In particular, and in contradistinction to the IMG, and even (heaven forbid!) to Trotsky's own clearly-expressed view in 1938, Gerry Healy stated, according to his opponent Alan Thornett: "I will not have factions in this party—I will expel anyone who forms a faction in this party".

And so he did. Unfortunately for him, the faction led by Thornett—the famous Cowley "mole", whose shop steward's credentials BL inexcusably refused to recognise (he had been elected, after all, whatever anyone thinks of his politics) in 1974 as a foretaste of worse to come—included just about all of the people who justified the inclusion of the word "Workers" in the name of the Party, leaving its only union "base" in the actors' union Equity.

The WSL, however, despite bringing out its own newspaper, *Socialist Press*, never managed to make any real impact even by Trotskyist standards, and was eventually obliged to go "pop" in more senses than one: cessation of existence as an independent body, and falling into the arms of the more "trendy" variety of Trotskyism as represented by the International-Communist League, with whom it is now united (though for how long?) in the Socialist Organiser Alliance—see previous chapter.

One factor in this sad collapse was the loss of the WSL's "Leninist Faction" in 1980 after the WSL had cobbled together an "international conference" of its co-thinkers, opposed to both Mandel's United Secretariat and Healy's International Committee (by this time comprising the WRP alone). The "Trotskyist International Liaison Committee", however, comprised representatives only of the WSL and tiny groups in the United States, Denmark and Italy; though, as such, it was probably just as representative of the international working class as the founding conference of the Fourth International (that is, not at all).

The conference, in December 1975, was marred by the non-attendance of the previously much-heralded Greek fraternal organisation of the WSL, whom they have repaid by never again ever mentioning them; and by the distribution at the conference of a document attacking the WSL by some of its own members, modestly calling themselves the Leninist Faction. A detailed presentation of their criticisms is hardly worthwhile, as since breaking with WSL, they have ceased to exist.

They may have collapsed into the arms of the Spartacists (coming shortly), who had lots of nice things to say about them at the time—very unusual for the Spartacists. Alternatively, they just *may* be the tiny group in Clapham calling itself the Workers Party (not to be confused with the former Official Sinn Féin in Ireland), or to give it its fuller and more pretentious title, the International Leninist Workers Party.

If so, they have gone further than any others in attempts to conceal their Trotskyism. Their supposedly weekly *ILWP Bulletin* regularly includes articles snipped wholesale out of *Soviet Weekly*, and will cede first place to no-one in its "support" for the USSR. Yet this "support" is coupled with an insane sectarianism and anti-Labour abuse which is totally at variance with the declared policies of the World Communist Movement and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union itself. On the cover of the Bulletin, a very cheaply-produced and boring affair, Lenin is portrayed at the masthead, hand on forehead, looking puzzled—and well he might.



Despite the *Bulletin's* expressed contempt for "middle-class Trots" (maybe they see themselves as *working-class* Trots), it's very tempting to see their combination of "pro-Sovietism" with lunacy as an attempt to smear the Soviet Union and its genuine supporters. Which brings us to . . .

### Uncle Sam Trotsky

The "reunification" of the Fourth International that took place in 1963 didn't merely cause a rupture between Healy's SLL and the US Socialist Workers Party (and inspire one volume of Healy's "Trotskyism Versus Revisionism" entitled "The Socialist Workers Party's Road Back to Pabloism"—a real bestseller). It also resulted, as these "unifications" will, in a breakaway from the US SWP itself, in the form of the Spartacist League, or the international Spartacist tendency, as it defines itself in its efforts "for the rebirth of the Fourth International" (presumably deceased).

As with that other US import, Shachtmanism, it took thirteen years before this tendency caught on in Britain. But whereas Tony Cliff had, admittedly belatedly, got together with others in Britain in 1951 to form International Socialism on the basis of Shachtman's ideas—and the delay gave him the possibility of claiming it as his own invention—the Spartacists were actually themselves imported, lock, stock, barrel, US accents and all.

For if the RCG are the "Shining Light Temple" of Trotskyism in Britain, the Spartacists are its Mormons. All right, they don't have the short smart haircuts, the dark blue suits and ties, the rectangular engraved plastic badges or even the strange combination underwear (as far as I know), but they do have the same accents and the same missionary zeal as the Mormons, and, some would argue, they effectively serve the US ruling class in a remarkably similar deceptive way despite their claimed adherence to a higher authority (God or the international Spartacist tendency).

This prevalence of Americans in the ranks (less than 100 strong) of the "British" section of the Spartacists has led many to suggest that they might have less savoury US connections than those they admit to, and even prompted some to refer to them as the SpartaCIAists—suggestions that they violently resent. But be fair: imagine yourself on the left in the United States. Suddenly there appears a dedicated band of fairly wealthy young Britons, telling you that the revolutionary movement has got it all wrong and that they've come to show you the correct way. What would *you* think? You wouldn't need to be a cat to smell a rat.

To be absolutely fair, since the initial importation of volunteers from across the Atlantic in 1976/77, the Spartacists (I'll call them the Sparts for short, partly because it takes less effort to type, and partly because that's what most people who know of them call them, presumably in recognition of their similarity to *Private Eye's* "Dave Spart") have managed to recruit some of their former colonial masters (the British) into their ranks.

They've even managed to achieve some unwitting support, such as when the SWP (British) got so fed up with the Sparts' continual interruption and disruption of their meetings that they removed them physically and banned them from all SWP public gatherings. The Sparts circulated a petition protesting against this

"brutality" and "undemocratic" action by the SWP (with whom I was for once obliged to sympathise) and got the signatures of a number of people in the labour movement who ought to have known better. In any case, anyone who can actually get beaten up by the SWP hardly deserves to be called a Trotskyist.

Arising as they did from the same split that caused Healy to break with the US SWP, the Sparts have policies distinguishable from the WRP only in being even more sectarian and decidedly loonier, if that's conceivable. Their sectarianism manifests itself inasmuch as their polite remarks about the WSL's "Leninist Faction" are a totally unique exception: they've never got anything nice to say about any other Trotskyists, although they've got plenty of nasty things to say.

Supports of *Socialist Action* for instance, are written off by the Sparts as "democratic socialists" (the ultimate insult for Trotskyists) and the RCP receive the presumably relatively mild epithet "Norman Tebbit Socialists". The more obscure a trend in Trotskyism, the more column inches *Spartacist Britain* is likely to expend on it. For instance, it spent 2½ pages of tiny print in its February 1980 edition denouncing "Lambert-Moreno: the most rotten bloc". Pierre Lambert was leader of the Internationalist Communist Party, the French (and only other) section of Healy's International Committee, who broke with Healy in 1971; Nahuel Moreno was leader of a miniscule "Bolshevik Faction" in Latin America within Mandel's United Secretariat, set up in 1978. Other readers of *Spartacist Britain* may have seen the deep significance of this several thousand word diatribe. I didn't.

The specific feature that differentiates the Sparts from the WRP—apart from the fact that they're different groups, which is quite a good enough reason for Trotskyists to be at daggers drawn—is their apparent support for the USSR. The effect of this is to draw into their ranks a few people disillusioned with the rabid anti-Sovietism of both the Tories and the Trotskyists; and also, as with the Workers Party, though perhaps more effectively to give "pro-Sovietism" a bad name, especially on the issue of peace, on which the Sparts provide the greatest service to the rulers of their land of origin.

Just how they aid peace with their support for "the workers' bomb", and just how anti-Soviet their "pro-Sovietism" really is, I'll examine later. But before leaving the Sparts for the time being, I'd just like to make a suggestion to them. If a successor to Sir John Betjeman hasn't been found by the time you read this, you ought to try putting your chief slogan-writer up for the job of poet laureate. The Sparts are famous as the chanters of the most complex, brilliantly-scanned and cleverly rhyming slogans on demonstrations in Britain. The problem is that their political content is often more in line with the well-known non-laureate, Edward Lear.

And a word of advice to the producers of the 1960 Hollywood epic "Spartacus": sue. I don't mean just because of the name; the man who died fighting the Romans in 71 BC must be turning in his unmarked grave as a result of their misappropriation of his name; so must Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg, whose "Spartacus League" became the German Communist Party, and is a title shared by the much more influential (than the Sparts, that is) Marxist student organisation of the same title in West Germany today. Even the IMG used to have a (short lived) student group calling itself the "Spartacus League".



No, I'm not suggesting that Universal Pictures sue over the name, but over the fact that the Sparts are often to be seen with 'Spartacist' written on their placards in exactly the same angular style as "Spartacus" appeared on Universal's posters in the 1960s. The Sparts could hardly complain; on several occasions they've been known to resort to the courts of bourgeois law with an enthusiasm hardly to be expected of Trotskyists. Stop press! *Spartacist Britain* has now (1985) changed its name to *Workers Hammer*.

#### Trotsky meets Von Daniken

When Mandel's United Secretariat was set up in 1963, it wasn't just the Sparts and the WRP who were unhappy. The Latin American Bureau of the Fourth International, headed by Juan Posadas, formerly in league with Mandel, had effectively already seceded a year earlier in protest against the proposed unification, which thus led to an even greater fragmentation. But if Posadas' disagreements with Mandel were massive, the number of his followers in Britain was miniscule; they currently probably don't even reach double figures, and have never been more than a couple of dozen. But I include them as a dreadful warning to Trotskyists and others of the logical conclusion of Trotskyism which, at least on the question of "socialism in one country", they finally reached.

Posadas' followers in Britain set up the Revolutionary Workers Party—British Section of the IV International (Posadist), the bracketed qualification being added during the 1970s in a break from their leader's usual modesty (their publications don't even give him a first name, just the initial J). They were hated by other Trotskyists for suggesting that there was still some hope of social change being initiated and supported by the world's Communist and Socialist parties. In order to balance this painful piece of common sense, the Posadists also held to the pre-1951 position of the entire Trotskyist movement with regard to nuclear war: that it was inevitable and just around the corner but *not a bad thing*. They preceded the Sparts in their support for the "workers' bomb", although even the SLL are believed to have dabbled in that line for a while, much to the embarrassment of the Soviet Government in its attempts to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Despite their sometime support for the USSR, the RWP at their inception backed the Chinese dividers of the World Communist Movement. The Mandel Trotskyists at their 1965 "World Congress", did hint at a general support of Maoism as against the rest of the World Communist Movement; the Posadists went the whole hog. When the Chinese put forward their "Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement" (the "25 points") in which they laid out their disagreements with the Soviet Party, the Posadists came out in full support: "The Chinese call it the 25 points. . . we call it Trotskyism", said the RWP in 1963. The Soviet Communist Party could not have wished for a better criticism of Maoism.

The insanity of the RWP's position on the practical desirability of nuclear war was indeed mirrored by Mao Zedong's reference to the atom bomb as a "paper tiger" and his claim that while nuclear war might devastate the majority of humanity, the remainder would be able to build a "beautiful communist future" on its ashes.

Without having abandoned the perspective of socialist revolution via World War Three, the few remaining members of the RWP have tended to play down this issue in recent years. But the brilliant innovation that they have put forward in its stead is the concept of the impossibility of building socialism *in one planet*. The argument for this, the ultimate extension of Trotskyism, is that the world has been visited by representatives of other transcosmic civilisations. The argument goes (within itself perfectly reasonably) that if the world has been visited by flying saucers they must be from an extremely advanced and thus communist civilisation.

If you accept the Erich Von Daniken ("Chariots of the Gods") thesis, then we can only hope that these superior beings (or rather, beings from a superior society) will help to show us the way forward to socialism. The fact that Von Daniken has been exposed as a charlatan, and his "evidence" as fakery and forgery, did nothing to prevent many followers of Posadas from falling for, as they did in the 1970s, the theory of "socialism in several planets"—a concept about as "socialist" as the arguments in favour of "flying saucers" put forward by Sir Eric Gairy of Grenada to the United Nations at the time of his overthrow in 1979.

Posadas is the only Trotskyist to have actually continued living after death, presumably in emulation of Trotsky himself, of whom he said in 1962: "When Trotsky said when he was dying: 'I think I am sure the Fourth International will triumph, go on!' it was because he felt he was going to live thousands and thousands of years." Posadas' immortality however, was guaranteed by the fact that after his death in 1981, there was such a massive volume of his writings (and especially tape recordings) left unpublished that the RWP's paper *Red Flag* can be kept supplied with his words, where indeed they appear in each issue, quite possibly "for thousands and thousands of years."

Whether *Red Flag* will last so long is another matter. It's fallen on rather hard times, and it's a long while since its publishers could afford the extravagant expense of red ink for its masthead, so it just appears in black and white. The total absence of photographs (other than one tiny one per issue) may be an economy measure, but is more likely a principled decision to make room for more print. In that field, *Red Flag* probably holds the record for the number of printed words per page (the Sparts can't be far behind, as their print is actually *smaller*, but they do have some photographs to relieve the boredom).

The RWP's handful of supporters have long been Labour Party deep entrists—so deep they might as well have drowned—so it's unlikely you'll come across them. But if you do you can't say you weren't forewarned.

#### Will the real Pabloites please stand up?

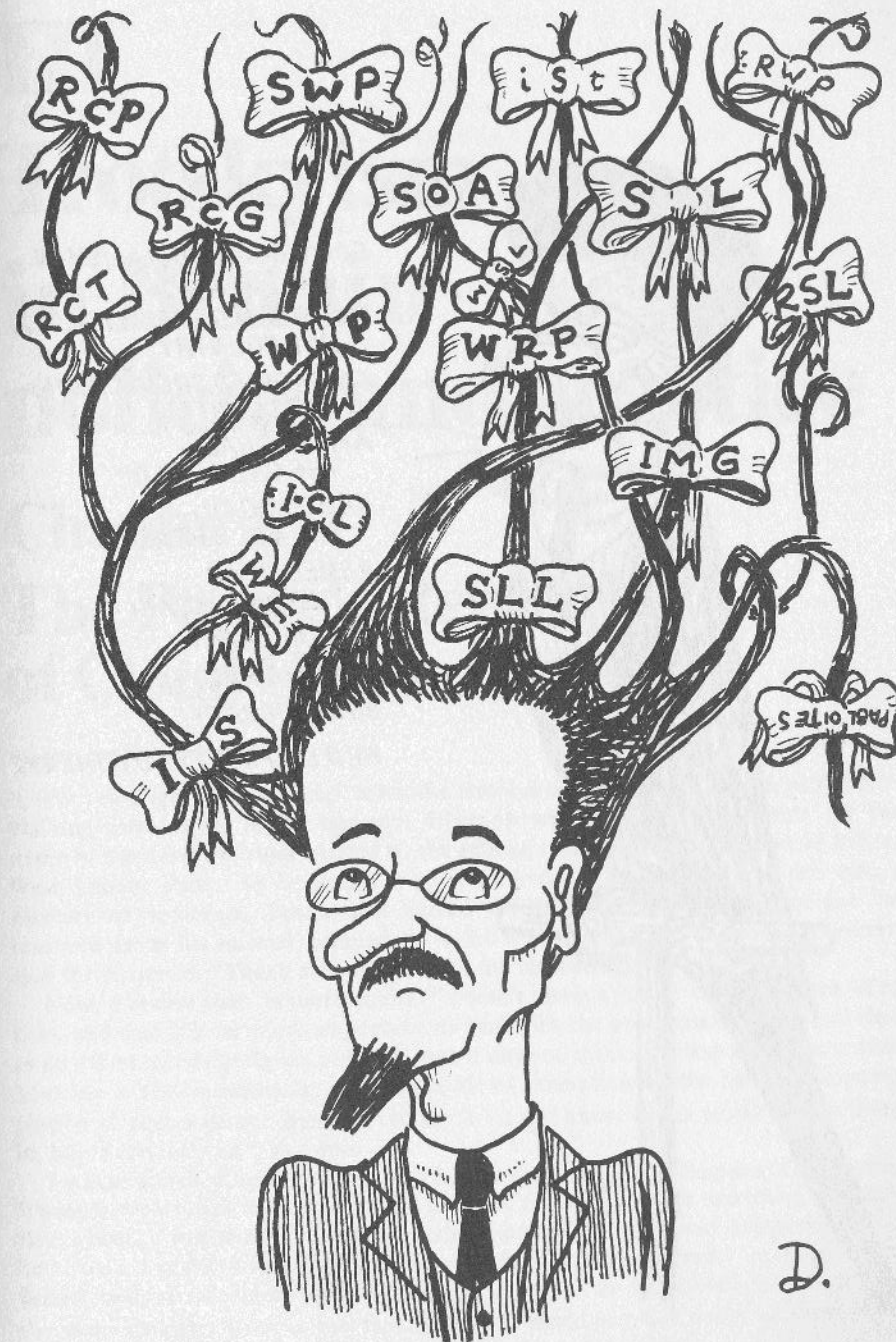
Another split which occurred as a result of the Fourth International's 1963 reunification saw the departure of Michael Pablo from the ranks of Mandel's United Secretariat, though it had little effect in Britain, where its supporters at the last count (over a decade ago) numbered one. It is interesting though for a couple of reasons.

The WRP continue to refer to both the RSL ("Militant") and the IMG ("Socialist League") as "Pabloites", although both groups broke their links with Pablo even before he finally severed his ties with Mandel to set up the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency of the Fourth International (Pabloite). You'll notice that like Posadas, Pablo has done away with false modesty and included his name in the title of his particular Fourth International. This should have been enough for the Healyites to drop the nickname's application to other groups—though they didn't. But at least now when you hear the WRP attacking 'Pabloites', you'll know what they're on about, even if they don't.

I recently came across an education syllabus in basic, not to say vulgarised Marxism, published by a group calling itself the Revolutionary Marxist Tendency. But I don't think it was the RMTofFI(P) for a number of reasons: it didn't give the full title; it made no mention of Trotskyism, or, for that matter, Pablo's variety of it; it made crude attacks on the Labour Party; and it was only duplicated. These last two points are important, because firstly, Pablo's last known supporter I know of in Britain, John Malos, brought out an extremely well-produced and glossy *International Marxist Review* in the early 1970s, and certainly wouldn't stoop to shoddy duplication; and secondly, he stood as a Labour candidate in Bristol West in 1974 (one of the few occasions I've ever voted for a Trotskyist, let alone a Pabloite).

Pablo had indeed argued, in his post-war period of control of the International, that there was still some hope in both Socialist and Communist parties—though he later changed his international orientation and saw the peasants' and national liberation movements of the "Third World" as the main "epicentres" of revolution. Strangely enough this was the view shared by the Chinese Communist Party after their break with the majority of the World Communist Movement; yet when Pablo broke with the United Secretariat, he gave its critical support for the Chinese against the Soviets as one of his main reasons.

He then went off to become a junior minister in Ben Bella's Algerian government, thus leaving his "tendency" headless. It only has in any case followings of any real sort (despite having headquarters in Paris) in Greece and Australia, the latter, coincidentally, also being Dr Malos' former homeland. As well as having been Pablo's last known supporter in Britain, Dr Malos was simultaneously one of the world's leading experts in cyclotrons: particle accelerators, in which the particles, rather like the Trotskyist movement, go round in circles at close to the speed of light.



D.





CAN'T BUILD SOCIALISM IN  
ONE COUNTRY!  
CAN'T BUILD SOCIALISM IN  
ONE COUNTRY!  
CAN'T BUILD SOCIALISM IN  
ONE COUNTRY!  
ARMED ROAD –  
THE ONLY ROAD!  
ARMED ROAD –  
THE ONLY ROAD!  
ARMED ROAD –  
THE ONLY ROAD!  
BUREAUCRACY!  
BUREAUCRACY!  
BUREAUCRACY!  
WHO'S A PRETTY BOY THEN?

# III

## Trotskyism in Britain~ policies and practice

### Chapter 8 The People's Republic of Cloud Cuckoo Land

Science or fiction?

A few years ago I was walking down the street reading a science fiction paperback. Walking towards me in the opposite direction was a "Militant supporter" by the name of Dave Brown, since elected to the general management committee of Bristol West Labour Party. As he passed me, he looked at the book and at me with a mixture of contempt, horror and hatred which was, to be frank, not too far removed from his normal expression. As he went by he said, or more accurately, spat the sentence: "That's a diversion from the class struggle!"

Now, I realise that "science fiction" doesn't always justify the first word of its title, and that it's far more important to deal with the problems of this world than to go off to others in flights of fancy. But if anyone thinks it's impossible to profess Marxism whilst occasionally enjoying a bit of relaxation by the harmless contemplation of such a genre, then all I can say is I don't know which world they're living in, but it certainly isn't this one.

I was so shocked by the hateful and barmy response to my innocent activity that I wasn't even quick enough to come up with a witty (or even sarcastic) response. Had I been, I might have asked my verbal assailant if he'd never enjoyed a pint of beer, or a non-Marxist TV programme (is there any other sort?) or even, heaven forbid, sex, all of which, in his terms, would appear to be indeed diversions from the class struggle. Such is the fanaticism of Trotskyists that some of them might even feel constrained to answer such questions in the negative.

I don't want to appear to be suggesting that Trotskyists never enjoy themselves and that they never consider anything other than politics—just that some of them give that impression. Bristol's only two activists in the WRP in the mid-1970s, for instance, were both young, single, not unattractive and of opposite sexes. Yet I was assured by somebody who had flirted with the organisation (and that seems to be the only flirting allowed) that in their years of political association and joint activity they had never even considered going out together on a purely social basis.

These are extremes, of course, as is the IMG member who accused someone of being sexist for pointing out that a girl was attractive (though I'm assured this was not done in the "cor, look at that, get'em off" fashion which would have justified such a response). Perhaps in the IMG it's only permissible to find members of your own sex attractive. However, as I said, these are extremes, and isolated cases too. But they do reflect a somewhat fanatical bent of mind, divorced from reality, which is commonly to be found among Trotskyist organisations and publications.

You will already have gathered from previous chapters that it is quite possible for different Trotskyist groups to hold totally contradictory points of view on the same issue while each claiming to be the true heirs of Trotsky—or even in some cases denying it. Indeed, on some issues it seems that the Trotskyist movement has as great a variety of positions as the Kama Sutra. I shall be examining these positions on the different major political issues of our times in forthcoming chapters, and hope to show that Trotskyism manages to *sound* revolutionary while actually hindering progress on these issues. But first I would like to examine the attitude of—seemingly wilful—divorce from reality that lies behind so many of the policies of Trotskyism today.

### A rotten theory

One of the most common signs of this divorce, which has clearly reached the stage of decree absolute with some of Trotsky's followers, is their adherence to his view, expressed in the *Transitional Programme*, that the world is not only ripe for socialism, but getting "somewhat rotten". This leads to an over-optimistic view of, to use the Marxist jargon, "the world balance of class forces". Funnily enough, the rose-tinted view of the workers that follows from this is confined largely to the capitalist states—the Russian and other "eastern" workers having displayed their inability or perhaps unwillingness to overthrow "the bureaucracy" for getting on for seven decades.

There is an alternative view: according to Ted Grant's 1960s pamphlet, "Bureaucratism or Workers' Power?", the "self-sacrificing and loyal Soviet working class is extending just one final period of patient trust". That "final period" is still being "extended" more than fifteen years after Mr Grant wrote those words. Those years have seen several countries embarking on the road to socialism, but—for all the problems of Poland—they haven't seen a single socialist state—or, for Trotskyists, "Stalinist bureaucracy"—overthrown. Either their workers are far too "self-sacrificing and loyal" for their own good, or they find that, no doubt to Mr Grant's consternation, the system actually *works*.

(The failure of the "final period" to actually be finalised doesn't prevent Mr

Grant from expecting it to be at any minute. A February 1984 issue of *Militant* carried a cartoon in parody of Yuri Andropov's funeral. Two giants, marked "Economic crisis" and "political revolution" have dug a massive grave and are preparing to sweep in the assembled "bureaucrats", who comment uncomprehendingly: "What can those stupid workers be thinking of? That grave's big enough for the entire leadership." I'm prepared to bet that *Militant's* cartoon wish will not have been fulfilled by the time you read this, or much later, despite the fact that wish-fulfilment is one of Trotskyism's fortes.)

However, it's when you come to the workers of the capitalist states that the wish-fulfilment of Trotskyism becomes most blatant. In Trotsky's words, the main problem is "the historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat". According to this view, the workers are straining at the leash to get involved in strikes and revolutions, and the only thing holding them back is the betrayal of the leadership. Now I'd be the last one to deny that right-wing leaderships can hinder legitimate struggles and that their activities can on occasion lead to defeat where otherwise victory could have occurred. Two obvious examples are the General Strike of 1926 and, more recently, the betrayal of the National Graphical Association by the TUC General Council over the Stockport Messenger dispute.

The trouble is that for Trotskyists, this is a permanent situation; and also for them it is not just right-wing leaderships that hold back the proletariat permanently champing at the bit, but left-wing leaderships as well. So you can't win; every case can be shown to fit in with the thesis. If a strike is won, it was because the revolutionary masses ignored their misleaders; if it's lost or doesn't take place, then the equally revolutionary masses have been betrayed yet again. In the same way, fundamentalist religious beliefs can fit any situation. If there was no concrete evidence of evolution, Darwin was wrong; if there is such evidence, it was clearly planted by the devil, so Darwin was still wrong. It's a perfectly consistent view within its own assumptions—the only slight problem is that it patently isn't true.

This idealised view of the working class sounds very revolutionary. Its practical effect is to ignore the detailed, patient, and often apparently unrewarding day-to-day work that goes into building a movement for socialist progress. All you need to do—and I've seen more than a few Trotskyists do this—is call for an indefinite general strike over every dispute, and hope it reaches the ears of the workers before they're stopped by the trade union bureaucrats.

This, combined with the WRP's "community councils" (come on, admit it, soviets) is all that's needed, it would seem, to fit the Fourth International's criteria at its 1974 10th World Congress for "moving towards the creation of situations of dual power or passing straight over this threshold" to socialism. A similar statement had been made by the IMG in 1973, when it argued that "the socialist revolution is once again on the agenda in Europe, not just in broad historical perspective, but even from a conjunctural point of view", and that the "central strategic project can only be: support, extend, unify and generalise all current struggles towards the preparation of a General Strike to bring down the Tory Government and create a situation of dual power in Britain."

If I find that laughable, it's not because I don't like the idea of the struggles of the working people being unified and taken forward in a struggle for the overthrow



of the entire system of capitalist exploitation. It's simply that it bears no relation to the real situation in Britain and Europe at that time—or on the countless occasions before or since when such an immediate revolutionary perspective has been put forward by Trotskyism.

### Political power churned out of a barrel-organ

Even when that situation of confrontation between the ruling class and a united working class does arise—as I indeed believe it will—how is that revolution to take place? Again, the IMG have the answer for you: “the armed road is the only road”. Well, they *had* the answer. That was their slogan on protest demonstrations against the military coup in Chile from 1973 to the end of the decade. Now that they're the “Socialist League” and embedded in the Labour Party, they make somewhat less noise about armed struggle.

I'm not clear on just how chanting “Armed road the only road, one solution: revolution” was meant to help the people of Chile, but the idea of armed uprising and civil war as the only means of achieving socialism in Britain is still put forward by most Trotskyists outside the Labour Party. I'm not saying that our ruling class are so polite, and such good cricketers from their Eton days, that some sort of armed confrontation won't occur at some juncture of the class struggle in Britain. The task facing those who seriously want socialism is to build the greatest possible unity for change, and exploit the divisions in the ruling class in order to reduce to the minimum possible the chances of the military being used against a movement for socialism.

But a time may well come when people in Britain will have to be prepared to fight for their rights in the most literal sense—and I'm not just talking about mass pickets battling with the police. According to many Trotskyists, however, not only is that time near at hand but, according to the aforementioned slogan, is inevitable. So just how well are they prepared to take on the armed might of the bourgeois state machine?

I found out in the early 1970s when I was told by Martin Barker, then the leading light of “International Socialism” (SWP) in Bristol, that armed struggle would be necessary in Britain. In that case, I asked, did he know how to strip down an SLR? Not only did he not, but he didn't even appear to know that the initials stood for “self-loading rifle”. Nor was he able to tell me what would be the important points to be taken in the city in the event of an armed insurrection. These were, he asserted, “technical” questions that the workers would have no problems solving on the day. I beg to differ. If you intend to take on the armed state, such “technical” knowledge is absolutely essential, as are organised preparations for its implementation.

But the SWP still holds to this position, and *Socialist Review*, July-September 1981, carried an article supporting the “right to bear arms”. The only trouble was that the article was on the USA, so the SWP was lining up with Reagan and the right-wing gun lobby. Someone seemed to realise this, because alongside the article was a strip cartoon flatly contradicting its message. Two blacks are talking: “We working class poor are really lucky to be able to carry guns”, says one, only to see the other's head blown off by an armed thief demanding “hand over the money”.

Presumably the SWP would be campaigning for similar “rights” in Britain. As far as armed struggle goes, however, I don't think that the SWP's third-generation breakaway, the Revolutionary Communist Party, has included guerrilla warfare in its annual “Preparing for Power” conferences—though it might be fun.

I don't know whether Martin Barker is still a member of the SWP; the fact that his latest book was published by Pluto Press is no indication, since the two organisations parted company some time ago. But I do know that his distance from reality appears to have lengthened rather than shortened since his airy treatment of the grave subject of civil war more than a decade ago. His latest book, “A Haunt of Fears” deals with the American horror comics of the 1950s. According to Mr Barker, these “were not forms of fascism or racialism, but used stereotypes to put across radical views in a popular form.” Very radical, I'm sure.

He cites one story “about a woman being tortured and then helped and finally tortured by her new helpers. Right at the end, the strip reveals that she's actually in a mental hospital. It's all in the mind, or is it? Seldom has the ambivalence of the mental hospital been so clearly stated.” Or more luridly illustrated, I'll bet. He can also presumably find something progressive in the story, also cited in the book, of the little girl who murders her parents, sees someone else go to the chair for the crime, then makes a winking confession of her guilt to the reader.

Mr Barker has also spoken up for video nasties, some of which “are quite good because they have serious messages for their audiences”, like, presumably, “I Spit On Your Grave”, which he has described as a serious study of rape and its effects. It is an explicit and detailed tale of gang rape and mass murder in retaliation—hardly a typical case. I haven't seen the video, but I'll bet that “serious study” is over-intellectualising it a bit, and I'll also bet I wouldn't notice any “serious message” in it.

It's probably unfair to tar the SWP with Mr Barker's silly brush, as he may well no longer be a member; but I can't help feeling that his main reason for backing the influx of sadistic American filth on to our newstands in the 1950s is the fact that there was communist participation in the campaign against them. This would be in direct line of descent from his SWP days, as one of the SWP's main tenets would appear to be “if the communists back it, oppose it”.

Just as silly (and unscientific) as anything emanating from Mr Barker though, was the statement by a *Militant* spokesman on BBC 1 on May 7, 1982: “There will be a revolution in Britain in two, three, five, or ten years”. At least the passage of time has narrowed his options down a little.

### The Trotsky School of Falsification—II

“Oppose anything the commies back” has been applied in pursuit of another aspect of the Trotskyist divorce from reality: if the facts don't fit, ignore them—or invent them. I've already shown that Trotsky was far from being above this practice, and his modern followers have often shown themselves his faithful pupils. In 1971, at the height of the struggles to save the thousands of jobs through the “work-in” at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, one issue of *Socialist Worker* carried fulsome praise of that struggle both on its front page and in its editorial. The fact that the leaders of



the UCS workers were members of the Communist Party was at no stage mentioned.

The Communist Party *was* mentioned in another article in the same issue, however, on how the party had betrayed the people of Spain during the Civil War (presumably by getting so many of its members killed in the armed struggle against fascism). The fact that the UCS workers' main leader, Jimmy Reid, no longer espouses the communist views he publicly claimed at that time does little to prevent that particular issue of *Socialist Worker* being an outrageous distortion of the truth—perhaps even more so than usual.

Trotskyists regularly complain about the altering of photographic records in the USSR in the Stalin period. For that reason I found it interesting to see a photograph in *Socialist Organiser* No 165. It was a photograph of Lenin—and admittedly no-one was painted out. But only a small portion of the well-known photograph was shown, for the simple reason that its whole shows Lenin sitting and smiling with . . . Joseph Stalin! A more subtle falsification perhaps, but nonetheless dishonest.

I'll be dealing with other such creative uses of the truth in later sections. But first I'd like to point out a couple of "original facts" about Trotsky and Lenin related—not to say invented—by Trotskyists many years after the two's deaths. Ted Grant's pamphlet "Bureaucratism or Workers' Power?" states on Page 16 (1960s edition) that Stalin was responsible for the death of Lenin and that the existence of Lenin's "testament" was not admitted in the USSR until 1956.

The first statement I have recently seen in a Trotskyist journal in a variation along the lines that Trotsky "suggested" that Lenin had been murdered by Stalin, but that there was no concrete evidence for this. Indeed there is not, for even Trotsky's article on that question comes to the same conclusion of "non-evidence". The fact that his modern-day supporters are able to draw the opposite conclusion from his article only goes to show how successfully misleading it was—or how dishonest they are.

As to the second suggestion—on Lenin's "testament"—Ted Grant must have mixed up the words "admitted" and "published". If Lenin's "Letter to the Congress" was not published at the time of its receipt, it might have something to do with the fact that as I pointed out in Part I, he never suggested it should be—and that Trotsky and his followers did not suggest at the time that it should be.

But it was in fact referred to on numerous occasions, including the *Pravda* article of November 2, 1927, when much of it was quoted by Stalin—including the criticisms of himself—some twenty-nine years before its existence was "admitted" in the USSR, according to Ted Grant. But at least Ted Grant has never gone quite as far as the SWP, who (as IS) in their 1960s pamphlet "The Struggle for Socialism" referred to Lenin and Trotsky as "the leaders of the Bolsheviks" both "before and after the Revolution", despite the fact that Trotsky's first attendance at a Bolshevik Party Central Committee meeting was little more than a month before that Revolution, which took place less than six months after Trotsky had declared "I cannot call myself a Bolshevik" (one of the few times I agree with Trotsky).

The International Marxist Group has even gone so far as to falsify Lenin—surely an act of sacrilege in view of Trotskyism's proclaimed loyalty to the great Russian leader. In *Socialist Challenge*, November 12 1982, a lengthy quote from Lenin has

his words "social democrats" replaced throughout by "revolutionaries".

Now that's hardly a criminal alteration, and it's one perhaps made out of a desire not to confuse readers with our own SDP. But surely it would have been better to use Lenin's own words and explain that in the early years of this century "social democrat" and "revolutionary socialist" were synonymous—decidedly unlike today? After all, some readers of *Socialist Challenge* (nowadays *Socialist Action*) might one day get around to reading some Lenin—and an explanation, rather than a revision, could have helped them over their inevitable confusion over some of his eight-decades-old terminology.

George Collins, in *Militant* on June 4, 1982, made a slight alteration which had a somewhat different motive. He translated the initials PSOE, when writing on Spain, as "Socialist Party". In fact, in translation they stand for "Socialist Workers' Party of Spain". Presumably the alteration was made for fear of associating a fraternal party with Britain's SWP, or, worse still, with Hungary's ruling party of the same name—something to be avoided at all costs!

#### A Trot by any other name

Another "falsification" practised by today's Trotskyists probably has more to do with pretentiousness than any deliberate desire to deceive: it's the use of false names. Now in the case of Lev Davidovich Bronstein—Trotsky—there was a fair bit of justification; he was, after all, wanted by the police and arrested on several occasions, so one of his pseudonyms stuck, as was the case with a number of Russian revolutionaries.

It's probably safe to say that the same was true of two leaders of the Fourth International: Ernest Mandel and Michael Pablo. Both have been on wanted lists, although their regular use of their false names may have defeated the object and might suggest the practice had more to do with emulation of their hero. Mandel's real name is Germain, and Michael Pablo is really called Gabriel Raptis. It's interesting to note that the latter has simply exchanged the name of one archangel for that of another—presumably in order to remain close to his god, although I've never heard of an archangel Leon. (There have been several popes called Leo).

Trotskyists in Britain, though, have less justification for the practice. For instance, it's difficult to see any reason for SWP leader Ygail Gluckstein's change of name to Tony Cliff—unless it's the fact that in practice he has rather less faith in the absence of chauvinism among British workers than he publicly proclaims. (Incidentally, he gives the game away when his writings are signed modestly without a full first name as plain T.Cliff. After all, if it was really his name, surely it would be A for Anthony?)

The same argument cannot, however, be applied to the Banda brothers, Mike and Tony, of the Workers Revolutionary Party. After all, "Banda" sounds every bit as foreign as their real name. In their case, it may have something to do with the fact that their real name—Van Der Poorten—sounds not only foreign but decidedly upper-class—a distinct disadvantage (though a common one) for Trotskyists wishing to pose as leaders of the proletariat. (Also on the WRP, as



far as I can ascertain, Cliff Slaughter's surname is genuine, rather than a pseudonym adopted as indication of his intentions towards his opponents if and when he gets state power—though I wouldn't feel too safe about that if such a situation ever arose.)

I can see no such reason for the change of name in 1977 of leading Bristol SWP member Colin Cameron to Colin MacGregor—unless the Camerons are a higher class clan than the MacGregors. The reason put forward at the time was the need to throw the police off his trail. If that were true, I'd love to know why he regularly wrote letters to the local press giving his false name but genuine address; if he'd succeeded in misleading the police, that was guaranteed to put them back on his scent. (The rise to public prominence of Ian MacGregor must make the new name an even greater embarrassment.)

The real reason for such changes—and I've already referred to the crazy practice of the Revolutionary Communist Group of *invariably* using false names, though everyone *knows* they're false—strikes me as a rather adolescent desire for conspiratorial practices where no such practices are necessary. Another name for that is paranoia. One form of that malaise is *dementia praecox*, or delusions of grandeur. You feel that they think the police *ought* to be after them, whether they are or not, and so act accordingly.

An apparently opposite—though in fact similar—problem arises with the names of Trotskyist organisations and publications. You may well have thought the absence of apostrophes in the names of those incorporating the word "workers" was a piece of illiteracy on my part—but no, I was merely being faithful to the wishes of their owners.

By all the rules of grammar, it should be Workers' Power, Socialist Workers' Party, Workers' Revolutionary Party and so on. Yet without exception, Trotskyist groups omit the perfectly correct apostrophe from their names. The only reason I can see for this is the fact that many people have a problem with plural possessive adjectives—the ones where the apostrophe comes after, rather than before, the s. Most Trotskyists are well-educated enough to know the difference, and I can only presume they're afraid of showing their understanding of grammar for fear of looking snobbish—so out goes the apostrophe.

The same goes for the non-inverted variety of the comma when it comes to numbers, as far as the Revolutionary Communist Party is concerned. When their paper *the next step* is dealing in millions, it doesn't bother with the commas between each set of three numbers; instead it just leaves a space, like so: 6 000 000 rather than 6,000,000. This may be out of a belief that there's something snobbish—to be avoided at all costs—about correct punctuation.

Alternatively, it may be something to do with the fact that Britain is virtually alone in Europe in the practice of inserting commas in numbers; on the continent, the method used by the RCP is practically universal. I therefore assume that it is adopted out of a sense of shame for being British. Thus, as so often with Trotskyism, the *appearance*, on a superficial level, of internationalism is adopted rather than its consistent practice.

I've already referred to the false modesty with which the RCP refer to their paper in lower case letters as *tns* rather than in capitals. I'm surprised they don't

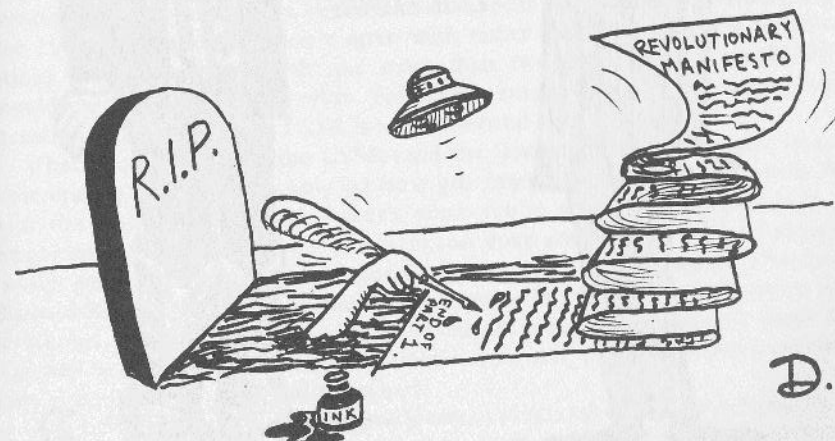
call their Party (sorry, party) the rcp (though maybe they do.) A similar case occurs with the Spartacists. Their particular "Fourth International" calls itself the international Spartacist tendency—or, in initials, iSt. (They've got to give Spartacus a capital initial—it was after all a proper noun. The use of the word tendency in relation to the great gladiator is unfortunate, though, as in his historical circumstances he inevitably had a tendency to be defeated.)

This style of writing initials may, of course, be common in the United States; but that's no excuse: if they want to be accepted as a British phenomenon, the least the Sparts could do is accept our style of punctuation. The same is true of some of their banner slogans. I've often seen people perplexed by slogans like "Unions, minorities must oppose" such-and-such. This actually means "Unions and racial minorities"; the omissions are quite acceptable in US-English; the Sparts don't seem to realise that the wording can create a problem for those of us who speak the home-grown variety.

Similarly, the lengthy headlines adopted by the Posadists' *Red Flag* may well be acceptable in Posadas' Latin American homeland. But would *you* want to read an article entitled, as was the one that took up more than half the front page and all of page 3 of their January 1984 issue: "The defeat of the dictatorship of the Peronist right in the elections in Argentina (extracts) 3.11.83. Resolution of the IS"? (That's International Secretariat, if you hadn't worked it out.)

Apart from the length of the headline (never mind the article), that "news" was months out of date. But such is the "realism" of the Posadist Revolutionary Workers Party that they expect people to read not only that, but another lengthy article in the same issue, "The Process in Turkey" (sounds like battery poultry farming) written by their deceased leader *over three years earlier*.

But what else can you expect from an organisation that believes Trotsky lived for ever, and that, as according to Erich Von Daniken, perhaps God may not have been a spaceman, but Trotsky surely was?





## Chapter 9

### The 64,000 rouble question

Can you tell SWP from Trotter?

The fundamental question for every Trotskyist is the question of one's attitude to the USSR and its allies: are you a State Capitalist or a Degenerate Worker? As in varying degrees, all Trotskyists oppose the USSR, this might seem an unimportant question, and some readers might feel that I am giving it undue prominence by treating it before moving on to what could appear to be the more burning issues of the 1980s. But though I don't agree with either Trotskyist position (or the variations that make them look like more than two—since such a simple division would hardly be in line with Trotskyist amoeba-ism), I do agree that the question of attitude to the USSR is a fundamental one.

What you think about the USSR—and the Soviet people—must have, after all, a determining influence not only on how you intend to achieve socialism in Britain and the rest of the world—if that's what you're after—and, perhaps even more importantly, at least in the short term, on your attitude towards the securing of world peace. Does the sort of anti-Sovietism typical of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan lend itself to the fight for peace in the world? I'm naive enough to think not, but there are a number of Trotskyist groups who appear to think it does (as well as others who have a more subtle approach, perhaps without realising it's just as injurious to peace and socialism).

But before I examine those cases where it's difficult to tell Trot from Thatcher, let's briefly examine the question of whether the USSR is merely degenerated but



still a workers' state, or has gone all the way back to capitalism—albeit of the state variety. I can't help agreeing with John Molyneux of the SWP when he argues (*Socialist Worker*, January 28, 1984) against the inconsistency of the former approach:

"If it was admitted, as it was by Trotsky, that the Russian State was in no way controlled by the Russian workers, how was it possible to call it a 'workers' state, even a degenerated one?"

You've got to admit he's got a point there—the only way out is to accept the Ted Grant theory of nearly seven decades of "self-sacrifice, loyalty and patience"—which frankly add up to plain stupidity. But if you're prepared to deviate from traditional Trotskyism down Mr Molyneux's SWP road, there is his alternative that the USSR "became a totalitarian police dictatorship in which inequalities appeared and widened, and all the vestiges of workers' democracy were destroyed."

Now I find this difficult to square with the USSR that I've visited, where I saw no sign of the inequalities that should have by now produced some sort of non-racial apartheid; or where most members of the Supreme Soviet (who should surely qualify as "bureaucrats" or "state capitalists") receive only their usual wage for their normal job—and the majority of them are industrial or agricultural workers, over 51 per cent of the delegates elected in the 1979 convocation, for instance, being manual workers. But perhaps we should examine Mr Molyneux's concept of "state capitalism", having done him the favour of accepting his argument against the "degenerated workers' state" so readily. There was a person around in the early days of the Russian Revolution who examined the term for us:

"According to them (the 'Left Communists'), under the 'Bolshevik deviation to the right' the Soviet Republic is threatened with 'evolution towards state capitalism'. They have really frightened us this time! And with what gusto these 'Left Communists' repeat this threatening revelation in their theses and articles . . .

"It has not occurred to them that state capitalism would be a *step forward* as compared with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic."

Hands up all Trotskyists who recoiled in horror at these words, just as their writer goes on to imagine the "Left Communists" doing. However, these are not the words of Stalin, nor even Bukharin, but of . . . V I Lenin! They come from his pamphlet of 1918 entitled " 'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality". That title itself should be enough to put the fear of God (or, more appropriately, Lenin) up anyone thinking themselves a Leninist but expressing the same horror at his words as those childish, petty-bourgeois "Left Communists" of so long ago.

But of course I'm being unfair and quoting out of context. What Lenin meant by "state capitalism" and what the SWP means by it are two very different things—though as supposed followers of Lenin you might have expected them to

have at least some knowledge of his use of Marxist terminology. What he was talking about was that sector of the Soviet economy that remained temporarily in private hands, but which was carefully regulated by the Soviet State—which even the SWP agrees was in the hands of the workers in 1918.

Their 1980s definition is of something completely different. According to the SWP followers of Shachtman's 1938 schism, the state itself in the USSR, or the "bureaucracy" if you will, constituted itself during the 1920s and '30s as a new capitalist class, which has continued to rule and exploit the workers just like any other—and even non-SWP Trotskyists such as the Socialist Organiser Alliance can describe "the bureaucrats in the Kremlin" as "just as bloodthirsty as Reagan".

Unfortunately for the SWP, they consider themselves Marxists, if the regular inclusion of columns like "Marxism in the '80s" and "Teach Yourself Marxism" in the pages of *Socialist Worker* is anything to go by. (Perhaps it isn't.) Now this claim should oblige them to follow certain basic principles of Marxism, such as the idea that the state is not something which stands above society but something which represents and defends the interests of the ruling class in that society. So the Soviet State could not in those terms become a class.

But let's leave aside pedantic considerations of Marxist theory; after all, Trotsky did, when in the early 1930s he described the USSR as rapidly moving towards capitalism, in a way with which his later opponent Shachtman might well have agreed, only to change his tune later. But look at it simply: how can a group of people with no legal rights of ownership or inheritance, no dividends to collect, no right to dispose of their capital or invest it elsewhere, indeed no capital at all, seriously be called a capitalist class? The painful answer is that they can't. Mind you, the idea that they *can* isn't unique to the SWP. It was shared, for instance, by the US Chamber of Commerce, who, in their 1946 red-baiting pamphlet "Communist Infiltration in the United States" stated "the USSR operates under state capitalism, in contrast to our voluntary private competitive capitalism." With friends like that, the SWP hardly require me as a critic.

Let's follow the Trotskyist "logic" through anyway. If the most basic principles of Marxism deny the possibility of a state machine becoming a class, yet the USSR remains imperfect, that machine must have become a bureaucracy dependent on the property relations of social ownership but with some specific interests of its own members that conflict with those of the workers. But such a state, "in no way controlled by the Russian workers" as Mr Molyneux told us that Trotsky agreed, could surely not maintain itself against the interests of the workers for nearly seven decades without at least some serious opposition which it could only resist if it had consolidated itself into something like . . . a class!

This hasn't happened, at least in the sense of personal ownership and transferability of capital and . . . wait a minute—haven't we been through this before? In fact, just as Marx said that history repeats itself, first time as tragedy, second time as farce, so does the "Marxist" approach of Trotskyism to the question of the Soviet State—except that it's a farce from the word go. In fact, the dispute between Shachtmanism and orthodox Trotskyism is rather more circular than simply repetitious. And as the circles of the argument become progressively smaller, Trotskyists should be warned of the usual ending for those who go around in ever-decreasing circles.



It was left to *Socialist Action* to square the circle by arguing that the "state capitalism" thesis is the way that most Trotskyists *feel* about the USSR, while the "degenerate workers' state" idea is how they *think* about it. A remarkably strange separation, you might think, for people calling themselves scientific socialists; and the problem is that they often let their feeling get in the way of their thinking.

One reason for this has something to do with the all-pervasive anti-Sovietism of Britain's media. In my schooldays in the 1950s and 1960s, this was so pronounced that I was in my teens before I realised that the USSR had been on our side in the Second World War. It's so much easier to give in to this climate than to fight it—even if you're a "revolutionary" Trotskyist. If you call something "state capitalist" or "degenerate", it's so much simpler than actually defending socialism warts (real and imagined) and all. But as far as the analogy with Cromwell goes, the language of some Trotskyists about the USSR and its allies would seem to put them squarely in the camp of Charles I.

#### The plane facts

*Socialist Organiser* is particularly virulent in its hatred of all things Soviet—despite the fact that its sister paper for youth, *Class Fighter* includes the demand for "defence of the USSR" in its list of principles. That's only fair, though, because somebody has to defend the USSR, and the Socialist Organiser Alliance doesn't extend that right to the USSR itself. One instance of this is the bringing down of Korean Air Lines Jumbo Jet 007. The tragic loss of life involved cannot detract from the fact that the Soviet version of the event has been shown to be substantially true—accepted in articles in *The Guardian*, the *Sunday Times*, *The Observer*, and even the magazine *Defence Attache*, none of which is likely to be seen as a dupe of the Kremlin.

The facts, simply put, are that the plane's deviation into militarily sensitive Soviet airspace could not have been accidental, that it was linked to an RC-135 aircraft openly acknowledged as being on intelligence duties, and its deviation coincided exactly with passage overhead of US spy satellites. After the US tapes (themselves an admission that the flight was closely monitored) were shown to have been doctored, it became clear that the KAL 007 had refused to reply to several warnings, and that the Soviet pilot who fired on it did not and could not know that it contained civilians.

Never mind these boring facts, let's have a bit of Cold War rhetoric: "A dramatic indication of the recklessness for human life, the uncontrolled ferocity, which flow from the very nature of the Kremlin bureaucracy". Real evil empire stuff. Who said it? Reagan? Thatcher? No, it's *Socialist Organiser*, "defending the Soviet Union" as only Trotskyists know how (the magic word "bureaucracy" gives the game away.) *Militant* went one better on the same issue: the USSR should "base its defence on the labour movement internationally", it argued, and not on a "military machine".

Whatever the merits or otherwise of the Soviet case over KAL 007, this is fine stuff. Very revolutionary indeed. The only snag with such a policy is that Hitler would have won World War II on the basis of it. But if it was good enough for Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk in 1918, it was good enough for Ted Grant in 1983.

Now it has to be admitted that much of the evidence supporting the Soviet case over the Jumbo Jet affair has come out only gradually since the event, so it would be possible for those Trotskyists who went along with the total condemnation at the time to plead ignorance. Unfortunately, they don't like doing that, so there's not been a word of retraction from any of them. The main question, though, is why they were so keen to make such an unconditional condemnation in the first place, when all the facts clearly weren't known. Like it or not, they effectively jumped on Reagan's bandwagon before he'd even got the wheels on it.

#### The Trotsky School of Falsification—III

Opposition to Soviet military actions, as far as the SWP is concerned, extends even to where they have not taken place. Many Trotskyists go along with the view that the USSR was the real force behind the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981—after the meeting of the Solidarnosc executive had decided on the setting up of armed groups for the overthrow of the state. This is a poor substitute for an actual Soviet intervention to complain about; but that doesn't stop the SWP. On February 6, 1982, *Socialist Worker* carried an article (admittedly meant to be humorous) by Eamonn McCann, which contained the assumption that the USSR *had* gone into Poland:

"The problem these Russians got is that they got no imagination . . . when you see a tank rolling down Gdansk high street towards the shipyard the one thing you can be sure of is that that tank is not a think tank.

"What they should have done is wait for Raving Ron's telethon and then plead justification on the grounds of gross provocation."

Nowhere in the article does Mr McCann mention the inconvenient fact that no such invasion had taken place—though surely he knows that, as might even some of his SWP readers. But his whole attitude is like that of the right wing in British politics: the view that the USSR habitually sends tanks into other countries as a matter of course. This is an attitude that causes CND much aggravation, and it's a fine thing to hear it echoed by "revolutionaries".

Similar "creative journalism" is often to be found in the pages of *Militant*. For instance, about a month into the miners' strike in 1984, that journal carried a photograph of a Soviet ship in Newport docks "unloading coal" in a despicable act of strike-breaking. Quite a scoop, and certainly a decisive exposure of the anti-working class Kremlin bureaucrats. It was only slightly spoiled by the somewhat less prominent correction the following week, which admitted that the ship was actually loading steel that had been awaiting export for some time, and thus aiding, rather than helping to destroy, British jobs.

Still, if the Soviet Government won't oblige Trotskyists by breaking strikes in Britain, at least it does so in the USSR—or so the SWP would have us believe. In 1977, a dockers' strike in the Baltic port of Riga, Latvia, was brutally suppressed and its leader jailed. I know this, because I read a letter about it in the



Bristol *Evening Post* from the earlier-mentioned Colin Cameron/MacGregor. I obtained further information on this strike from the Diary column in *The Guardian*, which added that a Bristol Trades Council delegation to Riga had failed to get a satisfactory reply to its question on the strike, or its jailed leader, who had led a previous delegation to Bristol.

Pretty convincing stuff, when a respectable "heavy" like *The Guardian* backs up Trotskyist criticisms of the USSR. The only slight factual error is that the entire story is a work of fiction. I found Mr Cameron/MacGregor's letter particularly interesting because I was in Riga at the time when he claimed the strike had occurred, and actually visited the docks, where work was proceeding normally (perhaps the strikers had gone in for the day in honour of their British guests).

And while it may not be fair to blame the SWP for the errors of the elaborators of their tall tale, as a member of the Trades Council delegation I have to point out that we didn't ask about the "strike" or the jailed leader of the previous delegation to Bristol. As we spent much of our time in his company, it would have been a bit silly to ask him what he was doing in jail. Had we asked such obviously insane questions, *The Guardian*, and no doubt *Socialist Worker*, would have been sporting the headline "British Trade Unionists Held in Soviet Mental Hospital"—which is where we'd have belonged.

Creative handling of the facts concerning Soviet Latvia isn't confined to industrial issues, but, as with the other non-Russian Soviet Republics, concerns the whole of their culture. Writing in March 1982, SWP theoretician Alex Callinicos said that the national minorities in the USSR are subjected to "Russification" through the educational system. I have also often been told by Trotskyists (who haven't been there, of course) that the Latvian language and culture are repressed and replaced with Russian.

Now perhaps the Latvian school that I visited—at short notice—was an exception in that all teaching was in Latvian with Russian as a second language—though the teachers assured me that this was the case in all schools. No doubt they were lying, and their poor "Russified" pupils had been given crash courses in Latvian the day before. Perhaps the street signs and public notices that I saw, all in Latvian, with Russian sometimes added but never on its own, were just put up specially to fool our delegation—a rather expensive ploy. Maybe the union meeting that I attended which was conducted exclusively in Latvian was a put-up job and all the trade unionists there were really multilingual actors.

Incidentally, an election took place at that meeting, which was neither more nor less bureaucratic than those in my own union branch, and when I visited the main post office in Riga the chairwoman of the postal workers' union told me that she was up for election herself the following month. I must have imagined all this, though, because I've been told by Trotskyists that there are no elections in Soviet trade unions. It's the same in Cuba, too: I read in *Socialist Worker* in 1982 that "it's true that Cuban workers don't participate in decision-making". Castro must fool his people all the time, though, because the Cuban trade unionists I met in their country in the same year had the distinct impression that they *did* participate.

It is admittedly true that trade unions in socialist countries conduct their affairs

differently to the way we do in Britain. I was asked by members of the Latvian TUC executive to describe the process of consultation within the Post Office in Britain. I recounted how the Council of Post Office Unions had regular meetings with management, and usually reached agreement on most issues; but where no agreement was reached, management could impose their own decision by executive action, leaving us the choice of acceptance or industrial action.

They seemed to find this almost amusing. "You call that consultation?", I was asked. Their system is similar, with one obvious difference. Agreement is indeed usually reached, but where it is not, and the negotiating process is exhausted, it's *the union's* view that's imposed, and management have to accept it.

To return to the "Russification" of these poor downtrodden Latvians, further evidence for this comes from the "State of the World Atlas", published by Pan and Pluto in 1981 and co-written by the SWP's Michael Kidron. Map 33 purports to show areas where local languages are suppressed, and includes Latvia as well as other Soviet Republics. I don't know if Mr Kidron's even been to Latvia. If he went at the right time, he'd be able to see the Latvian language being suppressed at the annual Latvian Song Festival, the main cultural event of the year, attended by many thousands. Or if he missed it, as I sadly did by a few days, he could read about it in *Cina*, the daily paper of the republic's Communist Party, published, as are sixty other papers, and numerous magazines, in the "suppressed" Latvian language.

With surprising though refreshing candour, the book's authors credit the CIA as one of the sources of information for this particular map. It's rare to see such an open admission, and it's a clear indication of the surprising breadth of unity that normally-sectarian Trotskyists are prepared to enter into when the opponent is the USSR.

The Atlas doesn't contain just this one piece of misinformation, of course. A map showing current rates of inflation around the world leaves the USSR blank other than for a mysterious "no data available"—which actually means no inflation available, a fact about the Soviet economy that Mr Kidron prefers to leave unsaid. Maps are abandoned altogether when Chart 52 gives figures for world unemployment: the USSR is lumped together with western Europe and America in a single rising graph of joblessness. Had there been a map, they could, I suppose, have labelled the USSR "no data available", but that wouldn't be true. Since its inception the Soviet State has issued annual figures on unemployment. Since 1930 that figure has remained the same: zero. That's a figure fairly close to the amount of integrity applied by Mr Kidron in the selection of some of his "facts".

When Alex Callinicos discussed "Russification", he showed at least some of that absent integrity by insisting that the correct title for the country being vilified is the Soviet Union, or USSR, rather than Russia—as nearly half its citizens are non-Russian. It's a pity that other Trotskyists (including writers in his own paper) have failed to take his advice—and that he has himself ignored it on many occasions.

This must again be put down to the Trotsky school of creative journalism, as must his 1982 statement in *Socialist Worker* that "Joseph Stalin killed twelve million people. That is the estimate of his successor, Nikita Khrushchov." An authoritative source—or it might be, if Khrushchov had said it, which he didn't.



Such a statement appears nowhere in the reports of the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the Soviet Communist Party, nor in the "secret speech" which speaks of "many thousands" of innocent victims, nor even in the obviously forged "autobiography", "Khrushchov Remembers". But it certainly appeared somewhere, even if it was only in Mr Callinicos' head. "Many thousands" of unjustified executions is itself, of course, a terrible fact; but it's a big jump from there to twelve million, even if it's one that Mr Callinicos makes with the ease of an Olympic gold medallist (Los Angeles vintage.)

### The sound of dissident drums

There are strict libel laws in Britain that make the spreading of falsifications—or sometimes even truths—about individuals illegal. Spreading lies about an entire country, as Trotskyists do about the USSR, is quite acceptable. That country itself has laws against spreading falsifications, and one who fell foul of them was Yuri Orlov. One of the lies spread by that well-known "dissident" was the hoary old chestnut of—you've guessed it—the "Riga docks strike". One of the complaints made against Orlov was by a resident of Riga, who had received persistent letters from Orlov congratulating him on his heroic leadership of the strike which hadn't taken place and which consequently he hadn't led and got rather fed up of being pestered about. Yet people like Orlov are the darlings of Trotskyists in Britain.

I wouldn't expect all readers to accept my view of all the most celebrated "dissidents" as people who have broken socialist laws and have nothing to complain of. But I would suggest that many Trotskyists take precisely the opposite approach and leap to the praise and defence of any outspoken opponent of any east European government with an alacrity that leaves Margaret Thatcher standing. and just as they're always prepared to believe the worst of the USSR—even if it means imagining it—they're usually willing to see all "dissidents" as good socialists and internationalists, however much evidence there is to the contrary.

Take Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (I don't want him). The WRP, in its SLL days in 1967, published an anti-Soviet pamphlet that contained several references to him. This included the statement that "it should not be thought that Solzhenitsyn is an anti-Communist" and argued that his criticism of Stalin was that he had betrayed Leninism. This sounds a bit silly with the wisdom of hindsight. It's now public knowledge that Solzhenitsyn despises Leninism, prefers Tsarism, and always did. In "Gulag Archipelago" he goes as far as to praise a saboteur for cutting the strings of Soviet parachutes in massive numbers.

How "progressive" this "dissident" is is plain to see. In fact, I've never felt that "dissident" was a particularly apt title for a man given a jail sentence for criticising orders and inciting disaffection in wartime (an offence for which he could have been shot in the British Army), spending most of it in a special prison with more than tolerable conditions, having his cancer cured along the way and being released before the end of his sentence— and then doing nothing but complain. That's no dissident, that's a *whinger*.

But if the SLL were taken in by Solzhenitsyn's pose as a "Leninist" it's because people like Solzhenitsyn are shrewd enough to know there's not much

mileage in walking down Moscow High Street and shouting "Hey folks, I've got a great idea—let's bring back the Tsar!" (If you'd tried it with the king in Britain in the 1650s the public response would have been shorter and sharper than any shock devised by the Tories.) You've got a much better chance if you criticise socialism *as a socialist*. Which is why the SLL should have been more careful in their praise of someone who turns out to be even more rabidly anti-Communist than they are. (They ought to have recognised the trick; after all, Trotskyists are very good at holding back progress by being more "revolutionary" than a 78 r.p.m. record.)

Nevertheless, even while Solzhenitsyn was dropping the mask, he received fulsome praise from the IMG's Robin Blackburn for his "The First Circle" in a review in 1970 in *New Left Review*, in which he described it as "in some ways the first socialist realist novel ever to have been written." Unfortunately for Mr Blackburn Solzhenitsyn would consider that an insult, as he would Mr Blackburn's mistaken assertion of his "fierce egalitarianism". Solzhenitsyn may be fierce, but *egalitarian*? Never.

Mind you, for some Trotskyists this is no problem. At a secret conference of the International-Communist League in the late 1970s (before they merged with the Workers' Socialist League but were already Labour Party entrists), a vote was taken on whether the I-CL should support *all* Soviet dissidents—including those of known reactionary views, which would have included Solzhenitsyn if he hadn't been the lucky winner of a free ticket to the West (one-way). My informant from that conference was surprised at the forest of hands that went up in support of that proposal, and when the votes against were called he prepared to raise his hand. A quick look around, however, showed that he would have been alone in so voting, so, lacking the courage of his apparently flawed Trotskyist convictions, he discovered an itchy nose as the target for his partly-raised hand.

It's not surprising that *Socialist Organiser* features "dissidents" more regularly than just about any other Trotskyist journal. It's a pity that "dissidents" have a habit of exposing themselves, like Bukovsky, hailed by *Militant* as a champion of the workers, whose first political act on arriving in Britain was to attend a meeting of the National Association For Freedom and shake hands with Margaret Thatcher; or like Sakharov, who went into print in a US magazine attacking the USSR's peace policy and welcoming cruise and Pershing II missiles. (If a US citizen exercised such "freedom of speech" by attacking his country's foreign policy in a foreign newspaper, he could in fact be the recipient of both a hefty fine and a lengthy jail term.)

A similar line has been adopted by members of the "dissident" organisation Solidarnosc in Poland. Its underground publication *Tygodnic Mazows* in 1983 claimed that the new generation of missiles "lessens the Soviet threat against Poland" and accused the peace movements of the West of being "in the hands of Moscow". The attitude of Trotskyists to such flaws in those they champion is that of the three wise monkeys. Except that they go further: blind and deaf to evil they invent good. The SWP brought out a badge which had the emblem of Solidarnosc superimposed on a CND sign. Now you might think that the *Tygodnic Mazows* statement was an isolated aberration; but Solidarnosc's official policy is that peace is none of their business. Thus the organisation, in its legal days, refused to endorse



the European Nuclear Disarmament appeal, despite generous apportionment of equal blame to both sides in the arms race (at a time when the US was planning cruise and Pershing II deployment). The Trotskyist ostrich, however, puts its head in the sand and there finds instead the picture of Lech Walesa as a fighter for nuclear disarmament.

Another Trotskyist blind eye would doubtless be turned to the December 1981 issue of the Tel Aviv paper *Zo Haderekh* that quoted Solidarnosc deputy leader Marian Yurchik as blaming Poland's problems on the fact that "three-quarters of the leaders are Jews who betray our motherland. We must change all this." All such flaws are ignored, together with Solidarnosc's policies of support for a "mixed economy" (translation: "capitalism"), of Church control over education, of opposition to Poland's provision of abortion on demand. What do such trifles matter? If they're fighting the "Stalinists", they must be OK.

Thus there were plenty of Trotskyists on the December 1981 demonstration from Hyde Park to the Polish Embassy. Were they embarrassed by the company they were keeping? Fur-coated supporters of the "Polish Government in Exile", which claims to represent the pre-war fascist Pilsudski regime, carrying such progressive slogans as "Death to Communism" and "Socialism Kills". And these Trotskyists are the ones who accused the Communists of betrayal of Leninist principles for calling for Popular Fronts.

With "friends" like those . . .

But what, you might ask, of the "pro-Soviet" Trotskyists, the Spartacists? Aren't they the exception to the rule, and true friends of the Soviet Union? Isn't their habit of shouting Hail Red Army more often than the Pope says Hail Mary evidence of their support for socialism as it really exists in the world?

Believe it or not, it isn't. In practice it's the precise opposite—though that'll take a bit of explaining. Slogans such as "Hail Red Army—Smash Islamic Reaction" and "Smash Reagan's Bay of Pigs—Nicaragua Needs Migs" certainly sound like support for the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and for Soviet military aid to Latin American liberation movements. But the second slogan, as well as being one of the Sparts' finer piece of versification (and a better rhyme than "Defence of Cuba/USSR—Begins in Central America") is an implied *criticism* of the Soviet Union. Nicaragua needs Migs—the USSR has not supplied them—naughty USSR. Don't be led astray by the fact that Nicaragua hasn't *asked* for Migs, or that the USSR has been more than open-handed in its assistance to heroic embattled Nicaragua.

As to the "hailing" of the Red Army, the Sparts do this in such a way as to create antagonism against the USSR. The tacking on of "Smash Islamic Reaction" to the slogan in the case of Afghanistan is a dead giveaway—and a free gift to anti-Sovietism in that it is calculated to arouse opposition from Moslems everywhere. The Soviet case (as "friends" of the USSR like the Sparts must surely know) is that they entered Afghanistan at the invitation of the new Government there in order to help it defend the country against attacks launched from Pakistan and backed by the CIA. But the Sparts prefer to see it as a case of "smashing Islam"—despite the fact that most Afghans are themselves Moslems and that the first

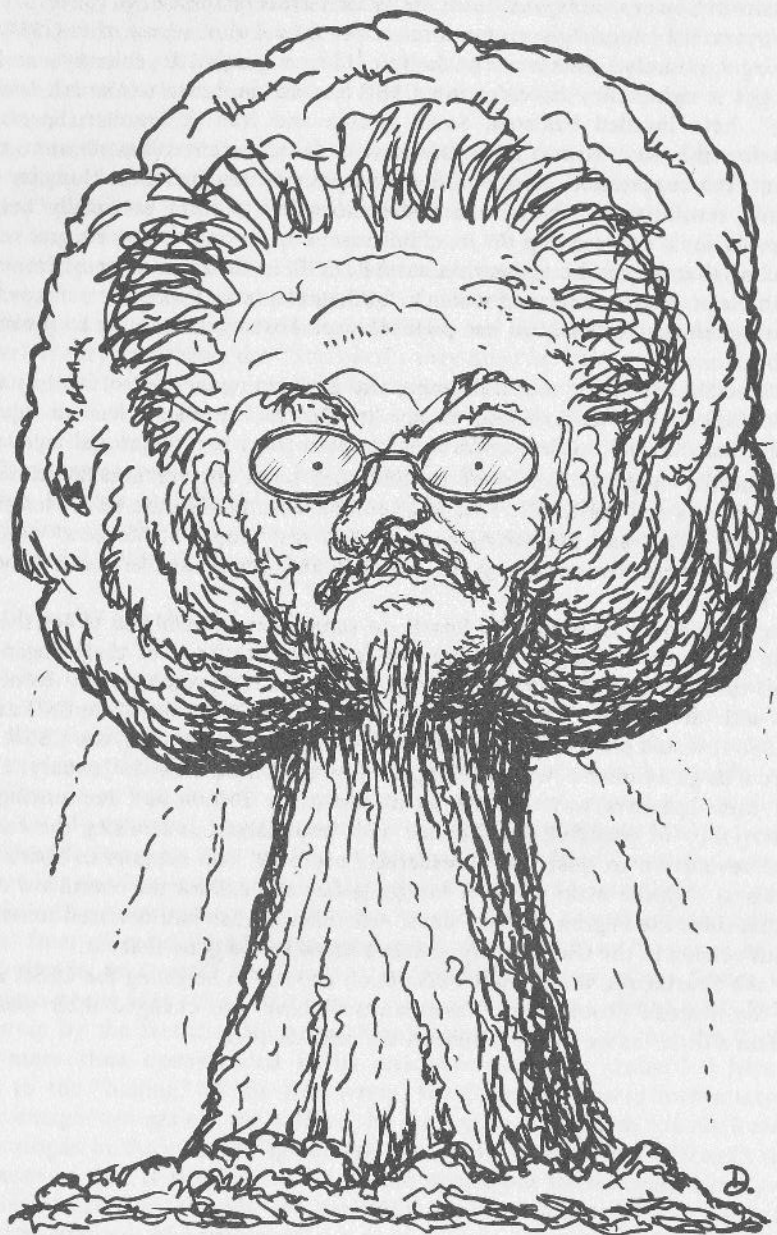
contingents of Soviet troops were from the Islamic areas of the USSR.

The Spartacist slogan gives ammunition to those who accuse the USSR of intervening militarily wherever it doesn't like a particular country; and if they've got it right (they haven't) the USSR should, in order to "smash Islamic reaction", have invaded Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran (it hasn't). (Spartacist support for the Red Army is in any case a fairly recent phenomenon: they condemn "the suppression of a working class political revolution in Hungary and potentially revolutionary ferment in Czechoslovakia". I don't personally believe that "revolutions" were going on in either case; but leaving that aside, you can't help feeling that Spartacist opposition to the USSR in these cases stems from the fact that the countries concerned weren't "backward Islamic ones", or perhaps that the Sparts seriously believed in the possibility of Trotskyists coming to power in one or both cases.)

The "pro-Sovietism" of the ill-rhyming and ill-scanning couplet of iambic tetrameters, "Defence of Cuba/USSR—Begins in Central America" has an equally negative effect. People on demonstrations about corrupt and dictatorial regimes in Latin America might be surprised to find that what they're actually doing is supporting Cuba and the USSR. That is, of course, exactly what the US Government says they're doing, and the Sparts concur. And the "dupes of Moscow" actually thought they were demonstrating for freedom and democracy in Latin America (which they were).

Being so opposed to Islam, the Sparts do sometimes feel obliged to let the veil drop. If you hadn't managed to work out from the subtleties of their sloganising doggerel that their pro-Sovietism was less than total, they occasionally come out openly with the slogan "Political Revolution to Overthrow the Kremlin Bureaucracy". So it would seem that the Sparts' favoured method of aiding the USSR is to overthrow its government. And at their picket of the US Embassy in January, 1980, one of their speakers was referred to in *Spartacist Britain* as "denouncing the Stalinist policy of peaceful co-existence with imperialism and raising the call for political revolution to oust the bureaucratic usurpers". So support in Spartspeak translates as "oppose main plank of foreign policy and call for the overthrow of". I knew that since the Pilgrim Fathers' days, American English had deviated somewhat from our version in the Old Country. I didn't know it had gone that far.

For the Spartacists, whose main occupation appears to be giving the USSR a bad name, the words "peace" and "disarmament" have also changed their meaning more than a little—as we shall examine in the next chapter.



"THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE OF WARS WILL NECESSARILY HAVE THE MOST PROGRESSIVE OF CONSEQUENCES"—Latin American Bureau, *Fourth International*, 1963.

## Chapter 10

### War and Peace ~by Leo Trotsky

World War III—no fear!

The attitude of many Trotskyist groups in Britain today towards the peace movement can be summed up as infiltration and transformation, failing which we get vilification or plain non-contemplation. On nuclear weapons, the views of Trotsky's heirs range from those who say there is no danger of nuclear war to those who say it is inevitable but *not a bad thing*; in between we get those who call for the scrapping of NATO's nuclear arsenal but not that of the USSR, and, conversely, those who demand unilateral Soviet nuclear disarmament. But before we get on to those typically diametrically opposed Trotskyist positions—and back to our transatlantic friends the Spartacists—let's examine those with the courage not to fear nuclear war.

The Militant Group show little interest in the terrible threat of a nuclear holocaust hanging over our heads. That's the conclusion to be drawn from their pamphlet, "What We Stand For", which allots one paragraph out of its 29 pages to the question of disarmament, a paragraph which demonstrates the lack of attention paid to it by including the misspelt word "holocaust". The proof-reader must have skimmed through that one as particularly boring and irrelevant.

So how come this apparent lack of concern over humanity's nuclear Sword of Damocles? Because, as so often with uncomfortable facts, *Militant* says that it isn't there. According to a Labour Party Young Socialists pamphlet, "Socialists and Nuclear Disarmament", reviewed in the paper in June 1982,



"In the immediate period, nuclear war between the super-powers is ruled out. Neither would gain from a world obliterated by a nuclear holocaust [they got it right that time] capable of accommodating only insects and deep sea fish! By setting off a nuclear war the super-powers would destroy the foundations upon which their wealth and privilege exist. But it is not only this logic that holds back the more rabid militarist sections of the ruling classes, but the strength of the labour movement.

"However, this balance of class forces does not remain constant, and the danger remains if the working class internationally fail to take control of society. As the pamphlet states 'in the epoch ahead only on the basis of a series of massive defeats for the working-class movements in a number of major capitalist countries with the consequent coming to power of militarist police-state regimes, would the possibility emerge of a third world war'."

This brilliant argument was apparently considered such a clincher that chunks of it were lifted and repeated wholesale in another article in the same issue—or maybe it was a case of repeating a lie often enough for people to believe it. *Militant* was still repeating it, in a series on CND, in 1984, by which time cruise deployment had begun as part of the US strategy for the war that *Militant* says isn't on the cards.

The facts are that Reagan has publicly asserted his belief that a nuclear war can be limited—to Europe, of course—and the first-strike strategy of cruise and Pershing II missiles is based on the view, openly held by a large section of the US military-industrial complex and its theoreticians, that nuclear war cannot only be fought but won. They're wrong, of course, but that doesn't alter the fact that they believe it—a fact that could kill us all, but which *Militant* chooses to ignore.

But *Militant's* argument that nuclear war becomes a possibility *only* on the basis of the establishment of widescale fascist dictatorships is equally specious. If a loony like Reagan can be expected to see that nuclear war is not in his interest, why should a military dictator be expected to be any less far-sighted? And how does *Militant* seriously argue that "the strength of the labour movement" holds back the ruling class? It can do that by uniting with the whole peace movement and exerting pressure for the removal of cruise, and other disarmament measures. But as long as we still have the weapons, some nutter in the White House can press that button, whether he's in or out of uniform, and once pressed, no strikes or demonstrations can make the workers' will prevail on their rulers.

That's a painful reality, but one that has to be faced in order to campaign effectively for peace—which *Militant* doesn't, never having been too hot on reality. Still, the June 1984 CND demonstration saw the first large-scale representation of the *Militant*-controlled LPYS, which must be welcome—though it's difficult to know what they were doing there with their continual criticism of CND for its "non-socialist" basis. Indeed, in the same issue quoted above, the CND's leaders were accused of "taking the youth up a 'non-political' blind alley", and "What We Stand For" asserts, in its sole passing reference to peace, "that only a socialist change of society in Britain and internationally can eliminate the danger of a nuclear [wait for it!] holocaust."

That's a view shared by many Trotskyist groups. As an absolute statement of the most effective way to eliminate war, there's something to be said for it; as a way of building the broadest immediate unity for peace, it stinks. But there is one Trotskyist group that holds to the precise opposite point of view: not that we'll get world peace through socialism, but that we'll get socialism through world war.

This was the post-Second World War position of the entire Trotskyist movement: that nuclear war was inevitable. It tended not to be very popular; why join a movement that tells you we're all going to die shortly anyway? So most Fourth Internationals quietly dropped it, with the exception of the Posadists. It has to be admitted that their miniscule British section, the Revolutionary Workers Party, have tended to play it down a bit of late, and given token support to CND, but it remains their official position just as it was in 1962 when Juan Posadas said:

"With all the historical strength and the decision of our conscience, of our confidence and understanding, we repeat, we dwell upon, we stress, the atomic war is inevitable. It might destroy half of mankind, it is going to destroy all the human wealth. It might—most of it is going to be destroyed, most of it. It is going to destroy and it is going to be a real earthly Hell, but that is not going to hinder Communism . . . all the material possessions that exist might be destroyed, but while there exist ten men who have understood what Communism is, there will be thousands, millions, who will understand and they will conduct the history to come."

For the sake of the human race, let's hope there are a few women around as well, to help build socialism in a "real earthly Hell". It wouldn't be as easy as Posadas seemed to think (if possible at all); nor would it be easy to win many in the peace movement for that particular point of view. (Or for the Posadists' former policy of calling on the USSR to launch a "pre-emptive nuclear strike against imperialism".)

### Disarming Trotskyism

Another point of view that doesn't get a very sympathetic hearing in the peace movement is that of the Spartacists, who are more pro-Soviet than the Soviet Government—or so they seem to think. They are sometimes to be found in peace meetings and demonstrations demanding the abolition of NATO, but *not* of the Warsaw Pact, and the scrapping of the West's nuclear arsenal but *not* the USSR's, which they welcome as "the workers' bomb". Now I happen to feel that the existence of Soviet nuclear weapons was necessary in the face of the nuclear threat against that country from the United States, whose generals several times proposed turning threat into reality; but it would be taking pro-Sovietism too far to welcome a bomb—workers' or otherwise—dropping on your head, as the Spartacists almost seem to.

But then, their position on this question isn't altogether in line with the policy of the USSR, or of the Warsaw Pact, which has written into its constitution a policy of not unilateral but *mutual* dissolution of both blocs by international agreement (the Warsaw Pact was, after all, set up some years after NATO); and a policy

of simultaneous scaling down and abolition of nuclear weapons by both sides. If people in the peace movement are taken in by the Spartacists' pose of "defence of the USSR", that could only contribute to the anti-Sovietism sometimes to be found even in the peace movement. The Spartacists would be setting up a pretty ugly Aunt Sally, and, to mix metaphors, trailing along a smelly but not-so-red herring.

Never mind the fact that they "defend" the USSR by opposing its peace policy: they know better. In the February 1980 issue of *Spartacist Britain*, they referred to Soviet support for detente and Strategic Arms Limitation as "claptrap",

"by which the imperialists seek to negotiate the disarmament of the Soviet degenerated workers state . . . this counter-revolutionary diplomatic farce would never have gone as far as it did were it not for the class-collaborationist, pacifistic illusions of the Kremlin bureaucracy in 'peaceful co-existence' with imperialism".

These sentiments were presumably shared by the US Congress, when, at the instigation of the CIA, it refused to ratify the SALT II treaty, thus ending a "counter-revolutionary diplomatic farce" in an act which ought to have been welcomed by the Spartacists—though certainly not by anyone who wants to increase the chances of humanity surviving into the 21st century.

The Spartacists' actual contempt for the USSR (and world peace—and reality) was also shown in 1979, when they rightfully condemned the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. They also, however, called on the USSR to "fulfil its treaty obligations to Vietnam". One Spartacist member at the time admitted to me that this meant at least an invasion of China (what else could it mean?) and possibly a nuclear rocket strike on Peking. How any of this could have helped the Vietnamese (or any of us, other than to "help" us into the next world) was not altogether clear. But the Soviet State, by failing to comply, exposed themselves as "degenerate" believers in peaceful co-existence.

As so often with Trotskyism, it's easy to find another group going to the opposite extreme. A letter in *Socialist Organiser* from one of its supporters on February 16, 1984 advocated unilateral disarmament by the USSR:

"Suppose the USSR was to unilaterally disarm tomorrow. That might give imperialism the edge in certain areas of international power politics . . . it is false to believe that the USA would then be able to invade the USSR unhindered. Soviet disarmament would be a tremendous boost to anti-imperialist movements in the West . . .

"Certainly a healthy workers' state would unconditionally disarm—we rely on the armed working class for our defence, not on any capacity to blow up foreign workers. In my opinion, a healthy workers' state would also say to the international working class that it believed its own defeat to be preferable to the world-wide slaughter of workers. At least we would live to fight again."

This is the same logic that let Trotsky throw away huge areas of the territory of

a "healthy workers' state" at Brest-Litovsk with his demobilisation orders. Lenin prevented him from carrying out that logic to its conclusion, which would have been "its own defeat" for the USSR, which, some years later, might well have left Nazi Germany victorious, and thus brought about the "worldwide slaughter of workers" it supposedly was meant to avert. (Even had the USSR survived, this logic would have had it disarm in the face of Hitler—and experience in the Nazi-occupied areas of the USSR suggests that few would have "lived to fight again".)

But it's a logic with a history. As far back as 1958, the Workers Revolutionary Party (then the SLL) produced a pamphlet, "Black Rocket Bases" which put forward the demand for Britain and the USSR to renounce the manufacture of nuclear weapons—without putting the same demand to the United States. Perhaps the omission was a slip of writer Peter Fryer's pen—but a Freudian one, to say the least. (In the same year, the SLL's paper *The Newsletter* showed that it was equally capable of the Spartacist variety of Trotskyism by condemning "Khrushchov's policy of peaceful co-existence" and claiming that it had "led to the Suez War". So the USSR should disarm . . . and ditch peaceful co-existence. And the SLL must have its cake and eat it.)

### The chicken and the egg

More recently the Young Socialists (SLL/WRP variety, not LPYS) put forward the line suggested by *Militant* when they argued in the February 18, 1984 issue of *Young Socialist*, that "the only way to prevent nuclear war is by the overthrow of this outmoded, archaic system and the setting up of a socialist planned economy, consciously controlled by workers and youth." That's Trotskyism for "let's not bother to do anything about nuclear war", which probably explains the WRP's total non-participation in any peace movement (that and their insane sectarianism).

This is a view held by the WRP since their SLL days when, in May 1960, they argued that "the cause of war is capitalism and the way to end war is to abolish capitalism", later calling on the Soviet Government to break off summit talks on nuclear weapons as the result of this analysis.

Even today, in varying degrees, that's an analysis shared even by those Trotskyist groups that do participate in the peace movement. And it's one they do their best to foist on that movement. For instance, a *Class Fighter* (youth paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance) pamphlet entitled "Scrap the Bosses! Stop the Bomb!" includes as a heading the slogan "Stop War! Smash Capitalism!" and the paper itself in its January/February 1984 edition argued: "To the CND leadership who try to turn our campaign into a freeze movement and recruit SDP and 'wet Tories', we have only one thing to say. Peace and disarmament will only come through a socialist government."

Now you might think this point of view was fair enough: political groups have every right to make the link—and it's a very real one—between peace and socialism in their own literature. But when *Class Fighter* and other Trotskyist publications accompany such slogans with large CND emblems it gives the appearance that they have the support of CND—which they don't.

When I had the pleasure of interviewing CND general secretary Bruce Kent in



1983, he told me that "what I really object to on demonstrations is when smaller groups come clearly to exploit the situation to their own advantage . . . I think that people should come for the common consensus, the common broad base of the demonstration, with posters to fit in with the aims of that particular demo."

He may well have been thinking of the Socialist Workers Party, who plastered many cities at the time of one CND march with posters advertising it, looking for all the world like official CND posters, with the slogan "Only Workers' Power can Stop the Bomb". That wasn't exactly the official slogan of the demo (nor was the SWP's "Thatcher Out, Reagan Out, Victory to the Miners" on the June 1984 CND demo) and it's also not true. Or at least, if it is true, CND's wasting its time as it hasn't yet managed to achieve workers' power (nor for that matter has the SWP).

I'm not suggesting that achieving socialism wouldn't be a damned good way of obtaining world peace. But to suggest that nothing short of socialism can succeed, and then continue to work in a peace movement doomed to failure (by Trotskyist logic) seems to me yet another example of that fine sort of logic. Limiting participation in the peace movement, as some Trotskyists would have us do, to socialists is hardly the best way of achieving its aims, any more than the proposal that CND "should have been involved in every strike going" (*Socialist Worker*, March 31, 1984.)

It's the job of political parties to put across the connections between different struggles and the fight for peace; and you can't help feeling that with some Trotskyist groups it's their own ineffectiveness in doing so that leads them to shift the responsibility on to the broad movement for peace in such a way as, if successful, would soon destroy that breadth. In any case, posing the struggle for peace against the struggle for socialism is a misleading chicken-and-egg problem. World socialism would indeed, I feel, be a guarantee of peace (though some might not agree) but equally, world peace creates far better conditions in which to achieve socialism. Those who fight for peace *per se* are laying the basis for those who want socialism; that doesn't mean you can help the peace movement by foisting Trotskyist slogans on it.

#### CND contracts enteritis

Some groups, of course, go much further than the simple foisting of their own slogans on the peace movement: they try to take it over. The two Trotskyist groups operating within the Labour Party with somewhat less success than the Militant Tendency, the Socialist League (*nee* International Marxist Group) and the Socialist Organiser Alliance (I-CL plus WSL) took entryism to its logical conclusion of infiltrating just about everything going, and starting with the peace movement. (Perhaps this was only because of their limited success in Labour).

Accordingly, the annual meeting of Youth CND in July 1983 had a remarkably high turnout as did Labour CND in the same year, the latter being attended by hundreds rather than the usual dozens. CND would have been pleased, if it hadn't been for the fact that the majority at the Labour CND conference were making noises remarkably like their printed counterpart in *Socialist Action*, with a lesser admixture of *Socialist Organiser*.

The YCND conference was pretty exceptional too. No less than one fifth of all the delegates present were from the Oxford branch, which by the strangest coincidences shares the same address (and the same politics) as the Oxford branch of the Socialist League. It must have been a very active YCND branch, because in order to attain such a high representation at the conference, it had made no less than one hundred and thirty new members in the few weeks leading up to it. So keen was the branch on recruiting that many of the new members were above the YCND age limit.

Both conferences "democratically" elected committees with a preponderance of Trotskyist members who went on to press for their own policies as against those of CND, and indulged in permanent and organised harangues against those members not in agreement with them. Imagine their horror, and the predictable cries of "witch-hunt", when CND's national executive ruled the annual meetings out of order and appointed its own nominees to oversee the work of the two sub-committees. But the volume of their complaints was in direct proportion to the clear weight of evidence against these infiltrators. In a court of law, not even Perry Mason could have got a "not guilty" verdict on a charge of witchcraft.

CND's rebuff to the Trotskyists may explain their permanent sniping at Bruce Kent and Joan Ruddock. For instance, on March 3, 1984, an article in *Socialist Action*, posing as praise of the Greenham women, put it thus: "When asked about fighting the missiles and how best to do it, who do I think of first? Is it Monsignor Kent sitting in an office in Goodwin Street? No, it is the dedicated and courageous women" of Greenham Common. Bruce Kent has enough humility to probably react that way himself. But it is doubtful if any of those women would have anything but praise for his own "courage and dedication", and they might well resent being used as an excuse for a side-swipe at a man whose energy, effort and self-sacrifice are hardly done justice to by references to "sitting in an office"—which is in any case far from the truth, as anyone who's ever tried to contact him there will know.

They've learnt the lesson to some extent, though; the attempts at manipulation of the February 1984 YCND recall conference were less blatant, and an amendment calling specifically for co-operation with the LPYS was rejected (though that might have been Socialist League and Socialist Organiser Alliance mistrust of their fellow Trotskyists of the Militant Group). A resolution against witch-hunts was also passed, all members of the coven voting in favour, as was one calling for "greater autonomy" for YCND—in other words, that CND policy should not be binding on it (and this from people who not unjustifiably oppose the "autonomy" of the Labour Party's parliamentary section.)

And *Class Fighter* continues to call itself "the paper of the national left-wing movement"—a claim apparently based on its control of the Coventry branch and one south London branch of the LPYS and one or possibly two YCND branches. The Socialist League's youth paper, *Revolution*, continues to put forward its own slogans masquerading as CND policy. Its June 1984 CND demo issue sported a large CND sign and two official CND "Cruise: Return to Sender" emblems - yet the story accompanying the illustrations was mainly about the miners' strike and the headline read "Take on the Tories: Together We Can Win".



*Socialist Action* in the week of that demo had a cover dealing mainly with Nicaragua yet sporting a huge CND emblem. Perhaps out of shamefacedness, the emblem appeared in such a dark shade of pink as to be practically invisible against its red background. In the same week, *Socialist Organiser* gave more space in its headline to the demand for withdrawal from NATO than to any other.

This particular demand, regularly featured in *Socialist Organiser*, and, somewhat less prominently, in other Trotskyist publications, was not, of course, one of the slogans of the demonstration, which explains *Socialist Organiser's* emphasis. Now I'm no fan of NATO, but in common with many others in the peace movement I feel that the insistence with which the issue is pursued by some ultra-leftists is a diversion of energy away from the central and unifying demand for the removal of first-strike cruise missiles. The continuing Trotskyist influence with Labour CND is shown by the fact that, although it's not Labour Party policy, the Labour CND resolution to CND's 1984 conference included the demand for withdrawal from NATO. It's certainly a demand calculated to turn people against the peace movement: in other words, just what you'd expect from the followers of Trotsky.

#### Actions and words likely to cause a breach . . .

The efforts of the Revolutionary Communist Party with regard to the peace movement are somewhat more calculated. *the next step* in January 1984 contained a lengthy attack on CND illustrated by a photograph of Joan Ruddock contemptuously captioned "Patriotic anti-war protestor". Its "quotes of the year" included one from Susanna Bowyer of Greenham Common. Not for the RCP the milk and water approach of *Socialist Action* in using praise of Greenham women as a cover for an attack on the CND leadership; no, they go the whole hog and ridicule the women themselves.

Ms Bowyer's statement, "We don't see the arrival of cruise missiles as a failure for the Greenham Common movement", is clearly meant to be seen as ludicrous from the way it is put forward in *tns*. It doesn't occur to the RCP to consider the alternative to this fighting, undefeated spirit: roll up your sleeping bags and go home. Though maybe it does occur to them, because the same issue of the paper suggests that "fighting for peace . . . can only be successful when carried out from a consistently working class perspective" and that "revolutionary communist women support the struggles of women workers [and presumably peace campaigners] with the only thing that counts—working class politics."

Fine talk from a sect that probably has less contact with and more contempt for the working class movement than any other Trotskyist group going. Again, the revolutionary phraseology covers the reality of the approach: let's do nothing about the peace movement—except slag it off. (*tns* also slagged off Ken Livingstone for suggesting that Pope John XXIII was someone he admired. Shameful! All that Pope did was to contribute to the thawing of the Cold War that the present incumbent is deeply involved in rebuilding. Shame on Livingstone, who's never claimed to be a Marxist, for admiring another non-Marxist. The fact that the two have done more between them for peace than the RCP will ever achieve is of no consequence to these "revolutionary communists".)

The RCP aren't the only ones to publicly criticise the Greenham women; Paul Foot of the Socialist Workers Party did so, admittedly obliquely in the guise of a review of David Edgar's play, "Maydays", in the January/February 1984 edition of the Labour Party's magazine *New Socialist*:

"In the final scene, the Greenham women call out from all over the theatre, exulting in their lack of organisation. They have no committee, no leaders, no vanguard. They glory in the fact that no-one is elected to act in their name. The very basis of progress in the working class movement, the business of electing leaders who will take day-to-day decisions, stand up for them, and be accountable to those who have elected them becomes a virtue by its absence!"

Now I'm not suggesting that the Greenham women are an order of saints beyond all criticism. But I would suggest that a description of "the business of electing leaders" as "the very basis of progress" comes somewhat ill from a member of a party that, at its 1983 conference, warned against the danger of "orienting on the existing layer of shop stewards" and of "accommodation to the lower levels of the union machine" and referred to "the bureaucratic character of most shop stewards' committees". Someone who subscribes to the view that "comrades" should become shop stewards "only because they can use these positions to raise political issues in the workplace" clearly has near total contempt for the most basic levels of union organisation, and would appear to be the last person to lecture the women's peace movement on representative democracy.

The SWP's *Socialist Review* (December 1983), has also said that the peace camps in Britain (including Greenham) "are, and always will be, essentially passive, inward-looking, isolationist and elitist." Those millions of people all around the world who see Greenham as a beacon in the worldwide struggle for peace have obviously got it all wrong.

The same party, in the form of Alex Callinicos (*Socialist Worker*, July 24, 1982), denounced the Scandinavian women's peace march to Moscow on the grounds that it was "shadowed by the KGB" (the SWP *backs* the dissident "Trust Group", presumably on precisely the same grounds). Callinicos didn't seem to notice that the march was also "shadowed" by many thousands of ordinary Soviet citizens in one of the most moving demonstrations of internationalism ever seen.

*Socialist Worker* also criticised (February 18, 1984) another woman for her visit to Moscow, and Tony Benn for backing the visit; the woman was Margaret Thatcher, on the occasion the funeral of Soviet President Andropov. "The excuse for the charade in Moscow", said *Socialist Worker*, "is that it will help get 'peace'." Even Tony Benn welcomed Thatcher's journey to Moscow on these grounds." Now a visit by Thatcher to Moscow may not be the greatest event in the calendar of "peace" (and the insertion of the word within quotation marks is a measure of the SWP's contempt for it) but it was still significant. When President Brezhnev died, Thatcher had refused even to sign the book of condolences at the Soviet Embassy, an omission for which even E.P. Thompson—no friend of the USSR—condemned her.

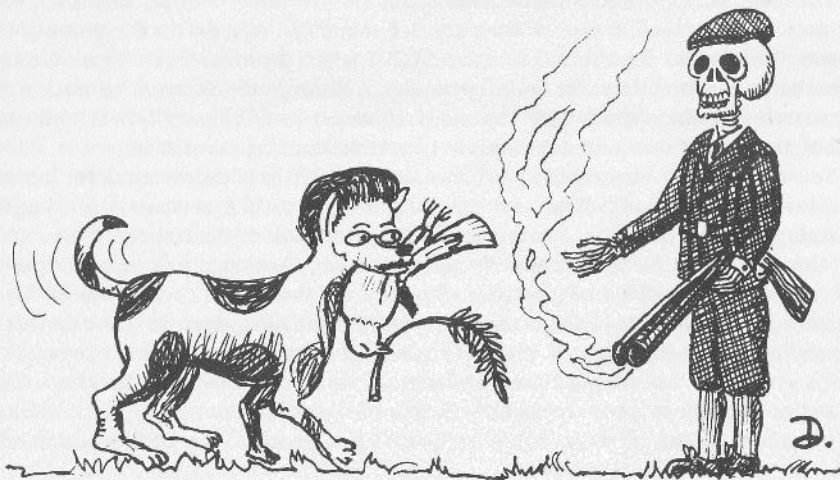


Can't the SWP see that the difference between the Thatcher response on the two occasions was a sign that nuclear war was just that little bit less likely? But of course for them nothing short of socialism will fit the bill for peace: "Only Workers' Power Can Stop the Bomb". "It's something people like E.P. Thompson and the leaders of CND should remember—rational argument was never enough to stop the bomb"—*Socialist Worker*, August 1982. Maybe not; but while we must work for the broadest action, including industrial action, in the fight for peace, rational argument (never the SWP's strong point) has a very big role to play, and has succeeded in winning thousands to the peace movement.

The SWP doesn't recognise that, though. In *Socialist Review* in October, 1983, the SWP confidently predicted the imminent demise of the CND after the month's forthcoming demonstration. It was to be the biggest peace demonstration in the history of Britain. CND obstinately refused to die and continues, unlike the SWP, to go from strength to strength.

That the advance of the peace movement is in spite of, rather than because of, the efforts of Trotskyists, was well shown by the 1984 conference of the National Union of Teachers. A motion there calling for a halt in deployment of nuclear weapons, leading to their abolition, backing regional conferences on peace studies and establishing contacts with US and Soviet teachers' unions in the interests of peace, was almost guaranteed success, as shown by the defeat of the president's attempts to rule its references to first-strike nuclear weapons out of order.

An amendment from the Trotskyist-dominated Hackney delegation, however, wanted to add withdrawal from NATO and affiliation to CND—both ruled out of order. Knowing full well that to challenge the ruling would mean that, because of lack of time, the entire motion would be adjourned to the "next session"—that is, 1985—the Trotskyist delegates went ahead and challenged it anyway, automatically killing the whole motion stone dead for a year. If they couldn't have their amendment, why should anyone say or do anything about peace? What a fine example of Trotskyist dedication to principle!



## Chapter 11

### Labour pains

#### Party pieces

In Part II I sketched the positions of the various Trotskyist groups in Britain on the question of the Labour Party, and came up with a fair bit of hostility. This ranges from the Revolutionary Communist Party's description of "the main instrument for winning the working class to the strategy of the bourgeoisie" to the SWP's 1981 statement (*Socialist Review*, July-September, 1981) that "the Labour Party by its very nature *cannot* be an instrument of socialist change", taking in en route Tariq Ali's writing off in 1972 as "a corpse" the party he now professes to support.

If that were true, that corpse has now become a zombie of the video-nasty flesh-eating variety, for it's swallowed Mr Ali's former International Marxist Group whole in the form of the "Socialist League". Indeed, the SL is rapidly becoming indistinguishable from the Labour left in many of its pronouncements, justifying, for instance, Tony Benn's involvement of the entire Labour leadership, left and right, in his Chesterfield by-election campaign: to say that he should not have

"is to say, in effect, Benn should have campaigned on the basis of challenging the existing Party leadership. Or in other words, the key task of socialists here and now in the Labour Party is to fight to remove Kinnock. To put forward that strategy would be to assume a political polarisation which does not currently exist." (*Socialist Action*, March 9, 1984.)

That conclusion seems quite reasonable—yet by most Trotskyists it would be considered heresy, and would have been not so long ago by the IMG. But their new-found “reasonable” approach has earned them the honour of having Tony Benn writing in their pages—an honour that, again, most Trotskyists would consider a heresy. It may be that the conspiratorial practices of the Socialist League have not been adequate to prevent its members becoming more like the Labour Party than the IMG.

The conspiratorial entryism still shows, however. At the beginning of the summer of 1984, *Socialist Action* announced that it would be closing for several weeks in order to move to (cheaper) new premises, rather than its “traditional” summer closure period of a fortnight. The strange thing was that at that time, *Socialist Action* had only been in existence for just over a year, hardly adequate time in which to establish any such “tradition”, unless it is admitted that it is in direct line of descent from *Socialist Challenge*, *Red Weekly*, *Red Mole* and *Black Dwarf*—which of course it is.

But if the Socialist League’s baptism by total immersion in the Labour Party has actually given some of its members at least one foot on the ground, the continued isolation of the Workers Revolutionary Party has raised the distance between the ground and its soles to almost stratospheric proportions. An article in a November 1983 *News Line* by Alex Mitchell attacked the following statement by Eric Trevett, general secretary of the New Communist Party:

“The main lesson to be learned is that unity of the working class can best be helped by coming to terms with the fact that by its peculiar nature the Labour Party is the mass-based party of the working class by virtue of the affiliated membership of the trade union movement.”

This, according to Mitchell, was an example of “the same reactionary idealist outlook that accepts the status quo and what bourgeois philosophers call ‘the accomplished fact’.” Presumably Alex Mitchell knows better; perhaps the Labour Party *doesn’t* have an affiliated trade union membership of over five million; or, if it has, Mr Mitchell recognises this fact as having little or no significance. But we really should expect this from the WRP: if recognising reality is a “reactionary idealist outlook”, we shouldn’t be surprised when Trotskyists simply ignore them. (The strangest thing is that in person Alex Mitchell is quite down to earth and has that less than prevailing virtue among WRP members, a sense of humour. But all this goes out of the window as soon as fingers engage typewriter keys, it would seem.)

“If, as Trevett says,” he goes on, “communists and socialists are natural allies, then what is the point of having a revolutionary socialist party at all? Why not simply join one’s ‘natural allies’ by joining the Labour Party?”

The reason is simple: communists and socialists share a vision of a socialist future, but Labour Parties are not based on Marxism-Leninism and do not base their view of the transition to socialism on revolution and proletarian dictatorship.

Communists see the existence of an organised body on that basis as essential to the achievement and defence of socialism, but much of the road forward can be part of a common vision. Only a Trotskyist could write off the mass membership of the Labour Party—the other side of Alex Mitchell’s coin—as a vital force in the progress to socialism (and even some Trotskyists wouldn’t be so daft.)

The Spartacists might not go as far as the WRP in ignoring the reality of the Labour Party. According to them (*Spartacist Britain*, February 1984) “it is always important to stress that the Labour Party in this country represents the great bulk of the working class,” but they go on to add that

“it is a strategic obstacle to proletarian revolution... it is a bourgeois workers party, that it is in its leadership and programme the agency of the bourgeoisie in the working class, and that particularly on Ireland its name stinks.”

There is some justice in that as far as many leading figures in the Labour Party go (not very far down the socialist road), but the “strategic obstacle” referred to is the Party itself. Nor is its left exempted from attack; the SWP’s *Socialist Review* (July-September, 1981) told us that

“to build the independent politics and organisation that is needed to prepare the class for confrontation, you have to be criticising those [left] leaders mercilessly. You have to be pointing to each vacillation of Arthur Scargill, each woolly compromise by Tony Benn”, and spoke of “a politics which breaks the reliance of workers on left Labour leaders”.

The Spartacists, of course, put it even more strongly. Their “Special Miners’ Strike Supplement” in March 1984 felt able to deride “the pro-imperialist social pacifism of the Labour ‘lefts’.”

I certainly don’t agree with every policy or every individual on the left of the Labour Party, but I don’t think that this kind of talk, or reference to “‘saviours from on high’, whether of a ‘left’ or ‘right’ variety” is the best way to build left unity, and goes well beyond what could be called fraternal or comradely criticism. So did a photograph of Tony Benn in the November 1983 *Socialist Review*, in which he was seen with his pipe upside down in his mouth. The photographer had clearly studied in *The Sun*’s “Let’s make Benn look silly” school of journalism.

But then Tony Benn, as far as the SWP is concerned, is only “acting as a left cover for Kinnock and Hattersley” (*Socialist Review*, February 1984), a view put yet more strongly by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency when they argued that the

“removal of [Reg] Prentice by constituency activists in Newham North-East could not represent a threat to reformism: it only confirmed the existence of an (illusory) alternative inside the LP.” (“Who Needs the Labour Party?”, Revolutionary Communist Publications, 1978)



Some might argue that the RCP's attitude acts as a "left cover" for the right wing of the Labour Party by suggesting that the left are no better; who else the RCP are preparing to act as a "left cover" for, we shall see later.

Meanwhile, it must be said that even those with the longest standing credentials as entrists in the Labour Party are perfectly capable of acting against the interests of the party to which they theoretically owe allegiance. A friend of mine during the 1983 general election campaign was selling copies of the New Communist Party's paper, the *New Worker*, with a headline "Peace and jobs, cruise and Polaris: LABOUR'S GOT IT RIGHT!" He was accosted by a *Militant* seller, and the conversation went something like this:

*Militant*: "What do you mean, Labour's got it right? Labour hasn't got it right!"

*New Worker*: "Have you been out canvassing?"

*Militant*: "Yes"

*New Worker*: "Is that what you've been telling the voters?"

The point isn't of course, that Labour's manifesto was perfect; but certainly the opposition to nuclear weapons, at a time when the Tories were falsely claiming that defence cuts mean job cuts, was one that made a Labour vote not just worthwhile but vital. *Militant* had seemed to be as little aware of the need to win Labour votes on another occasion, the Bermondsey by-election, when their canvassers had been practically putting the two questions "Will you vote for Peter Tatchell will you buy a copy of *Militant*?" in a single breath. The vilification and smear campaign against Tatchell by Tories and media was, of course, a much more important cause of his defeat; but *Militant*'s attitude wasn't exactly helpful.

### Voting with your feet (as well?)

If the approaches of Trotskyists to the Labour Party (and their rapid movements away from it in horror) are many and varied, what of their attitude to the "industrial wing" of the labour movement, the trade unions? Fortunately for us, there is an authoritative work on the subject: "Dealing with the Marxist Threat to Industry", published in 1982 by the bosses' organisation, Aims of Industry.

This outlines such methods as deliberately selecting low-ceilinged, uncomfortable halls for union meetings, and getting your allies to stand together at the front, so that others will sheepishly follow on the votes; or all standing at the back and being noisy and waving placards to have the same effect; another way to win a vote is that "some extremists put up both hands"; when all else fails deliberately string out the meeting until everyone but a hard core of extremists has given up and gone home, then put your proposal to the vote.

Aims of Industry, you might think, is not the most reliable source on such a subject; but then the author of the particular pamphlet was "industrial consultant" Roger Rosewell—who just happens to be a former full-time national industrial organiser of the Socialist Workers Party. Far be it from me, though, to suggest that these were the sort of tactics Mr Rosewell was advocating before he saw the light and joined the employers: his new masters want something garish, and that's what he gives them—and they probably believe every word of it.

Mind you, I have seen the "delaying tactic" used, with the full approval of

Trotskyists. At a Bristol Trades Council meeting in the late 1970s, a delegate turned up an hour and a half late—close to the end of the meeting—demanding the right to move his resolution, which had earlier, in line with the rules of debate, been declared to have "fallen" owing to the absence of the mover. As it was a motion condemning the USSR over "dissidents" and "mental hospitals", both right-wingers and Trotskyists present were only too happy to see it restored to the agenda, and the chairman was swayed.

During the debate on the motion (which had been handed in rather suspiciously at the previous meeting, scribbled on the back of a leaflet) the speaker made it quite clear that his own views were right of centre. (This did not stop the Trotskyists present from agreeing with him and voting for his proposal; including one who on another occasion voted against a resolution moved by me—although he said he agreed with it—on the grounds that he disapproved of my political motives.) The speaker also claimed as evidence that British psychiatry was "more human" and the fact that at the hospital where he worked electro-convulsive therapy was only administered twice a week (it is banned in the USSR). He also introduced as evidence the condemnation of Soviet psychiatry by the World Psychiatric Association, while neglecting to point out that the vote was by a minority of countries—the US and a few allies—but that voting in that body was dependent on how much cash you put into it.

Still, rather late in the day, the resolution was passed—on the basis of what to me was blatant sharp practice. So if Trotskyists aren't quite the crooks Mr Rosewell portrays them as, they are at least prepared to go along with those who are. (The alliance was even unholy than they realised: I later discovered the mover to be a supporter of the "Christian League of Southern Africa"—a body since exposed as wholly funded by the apartheid regime. But of course they couldn't know that.)

### Divide and fool

I would never have been a delegate to that trades council if it had been left up to a Trotskyist member of my union branch. When affiliation was raised in my Union of Post Office Workers branch in 1973, a postman (with a degree) in the SWP made a lengthy speech criticising the Trades Council (and the Branch) but coming to the contradictory conclusion that we should be affiliated. Had his been the only argument, there would have been little hope of that; shorter speeches on the need for trade union unity in the face of the Heath Government fortunately had a more positive effect.

Similar divisiveness comes in the form of attacks on what the Sparts call "the so-called 'left'" in the trade union movement. A letter in *Socialist Worker* (February 2, 1984) explained that "on the 'left' officials" in the unions, "it is precisely because they claim to be left that we are so hard on them." What an excellent recipe for militant unity in the trade union movement!

Just how "revolutionary" the Workers Revolutionary Party is was shown during TUC week in 1983, when *News Line* published a letter received some weeks earlier by a leading WRP member from Arthur Scargill in response to an enquiry about Solidarnosc in Poland. Scargill, in a reply not intended for publication (that doesn't

stop the WRP), said that while he accepted Solidarnisc's right to exist, he was opposed to its methods aimed against a Socialist State. The publication was deliberately held up till TUC week to create the worst embarrassment for Scargill, who was leapt upon by the worst right-wingers in the movement as a result—much, no doubt, to the glee of the WRP.

Criticism of left officials was carried so far by the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1984 that they joined their voices to those of the Government and the National Coal Board in the demand that the National Union of Mineworkers should organise a secret ballot. They also argue against the closed shop on the grounds that it is undemocratic. What was that I was saying earlier about people acting as "left covers" for the right wing? In this case the cover's pretty transparent.

Fortunately the presence of the RCP in the trade union movement is so small that they have little chance of creating serious division with such slogans. Their greatest achievement in the movement was to get Tameside Trades Council, the only one in which they had any influence, disaffiliated from the TUC by backing an ultra-leftist conference on Ireland entitled "Bring the War to Britain". Some claim to fame!

#### Back to front

Another common tactic among Trotskyists is the setting up of "broad fronts" that tend, on closer examination, to be more "front" than "broad". I earlier discussed briefly the Broad Left Organising Committee, set up largely by supporters of *Militant*, though in fairness it must be admitted that it attracted a broader spectrum than its initial sponsorship. *Militant* has been less successful on other occasions and let the mask slip. On November 11, 1983, the paper admitted:

"A mistake appeared in last week's article on POEU youth by Steve Jones. It accredited the Young Workers' Assembly as being organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists. The Assembly was in fact being organised by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign. We apologise to the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and to Steve Jones for this error."

The "error" was an easy one to make: the YTURC is in fact a wholly-owned subsidiary of the LPYS, in which *Militant* has an overwhelming majority shareholding and all the seats on the board. A similar mistake was made by the SWP when they allowed the "Jobs Not Yops" slogan of the supposedly "independent" and "broad" Right to Work Campaign's February 1982 London march to be enclosed in a fist emblem that was patently indistinguishable from the SWP's own emblem.

The SWP's loss of much of its limited base in industry was accompanied by the effective dissolution of its own front organisations, the "rank and file movements", formalised at the October 1983 conference which ratified the swing towards geographical branches that took place 18 months earlier. They still cling to a semi-anarchist view of "leadership from below" and see their role as "the creation of a network of militants at shopfloor level"—those considered worthy of membership

being "those who take *Socialist Worker*" after a dispute is over. (October 1983 Conference resolutions).

But this sectarian approach has nothing on that of the Workers Revolutionary Party, who don't merely set up front organisations within the movement, but seek to substitute their party for the entire movement. Thus, the "All Trades Unions Alliance" makes no pretence of "broadness" but proudly (if foolishly) declares itself the "Industrial Department of the WRP", and considers itself qualified to call a general strike. Further, *News Line* declares (for instance, March 19, 1984) that

"The bankruptcy and crisis of the trade union leaderships and the lack of a concrete political strategy revealed by the ballot manoeuvre makes the building of the Workers Revolutionary Party and the *News Line* the most urgent need for British workers—miners included."

Everybody recognises that obvious truth; everyone, that is, except British workers—miners included. That doesn't prevent *News Line* from including the building of its own circulation and the WRP in every list of demands, or suggesting that

"the headlong slide to a bonapartist regime . . . lays the basis for the working class under the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party to use its undefeated strength to defeat the Thatcherite bonapartist conspiracy and open the road to workers' power."

It's unfair, though, to describe this as an approach to the trade union movement; it's a total bypassing of it (not to mention of reality). But speaking of workers' power, or rather Workers Power, let's note in passing that the SWP breakaway in 1978 claimed to have "addressed the problem which had bedevilled the 'Trotskyist' groups in the 1970s: the task of building a rank and file movement in the unions." They may have addressed it; but their letter remains undelivered, and their influence in the unions remains, for all their pomposity and self-regard, at that well-known round figure: zero.

But if the WRP sees itself as the whole movement, and others with equally non-existent justification, as its rank and file, *Militant* supporters have managed to achieve leading positions in a number of trade unions—the CPSA, the Fire Brigades Union, the Bakers' Union and the POEU. If, as Trotsky asserted, the crisis of the working class movement is a crisis of leadership, how is it that unions with a significant Trotskyist participation in their leaderships cannot realistically claim to have gone any further forward than other sections of the movement? And sometimes even backwards, as with the see-saw process with the right wing in the CPSA. It's a question I've yet to see answered.

#### Rock bottom

It's a question likely to be asked of the Socialist League, whose total absence of any industrial base led to the "Cowley Red Moles" scandal in 1983. When thirteen



supporters of *Socialist Action* were sacked by British Leyland after several falsifications in their job applications were discovered, the Fleet Street press, particularly its gutter variety, had a field day, hounding the individuals concerned, going through their dustbins, exaggerating their educational qualifications (which they themselves had understated).

Another field day was had by *Socialist Action* itself, with headlines such as "STOP WITCH HUNT-DEFEND UNIONS", and the former International Marxist Group had the pleasure of an unaccustomed bathe in the limelight. Of course the Fleet Street claims were exaggerated; of course the action of the BL management was despicable (and the despicable Mr Rosewell is said to have acted as their consultant in the affair); of course workers are often forced to doctor the facts when applying for jobs for fear of blacklists.

But in all the generalised complaints by *Socialist Action*, certain points remained unchallenged: the internal Socialist League (IMG) document, "Jobs Special", urging applications in a new intake at BL Cowley was never disowned as a media falsification; the applications of those sacked were simultaneous; many false references came from addresses with Socialist League connections, including the "famous" Bullington Road base for YCND infiltration.

There's admittedly a world of difference between conspiring to take over (and wreck) a section of the peace movement, and using similar methods to establish a base in industry where none exists; starting from the bottom up in the trade union movement because your contacts there are, to put it politely, limited. But when you're caught out, to demand of the entire labour movement that defence of you should be its main priority is an unbelievable arrogance. Workers are sacked every day by anti-union, witch-hunting managements; strangely enough, it's only when the "workers" are its own supporters ("strong socialists"—that is Trotskyists, the paper called them) that *Socialist Action* covers its front page for weeks on end with demands for their defence. Can't they see that just as with the peace movement, their even more pathetic attempts to infiltrate industry from the bottom up have done nothing but harm to the movement? Obviously, though sadly, the answer is no.

### Striking generalities

Meanwhile, the putting forward of unrealisable demands by other Trotskyists, especially those with the least contact with organised workers, continues. Demanding actions for which no base exists was never the most effective way to unite the movement and take it forward. Thus while the WRP's All Trades Unions Alliance's call for a general strike in 1984 in support of the miners seems reasonable enough (till you read the small print and realise that the organisation is to be carried out by none other than the ATUA itself), they and other Trotskyists have been putting it forward on every occasion for years.

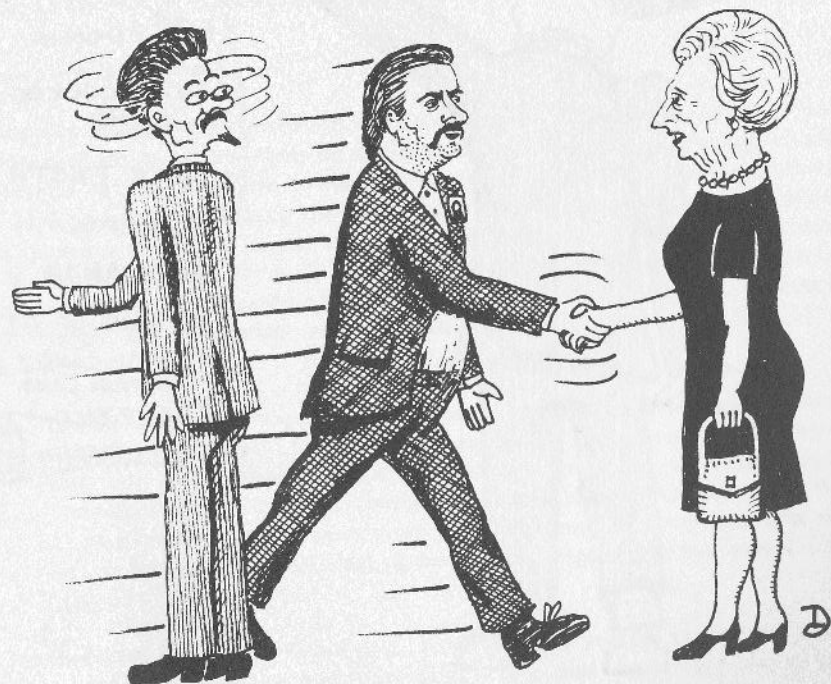
Similarly, the Spartacists, whose proposed solution to the French Talbot strike was the formation of "workers' militias", and who picketed the 1983 TUC with the slogans "Seize the bosses' assets! Occupy Fleet Street!", were in 1980 demanding "Spread the steel strike! Get the Iron Lady! General Strike now!" at a time when

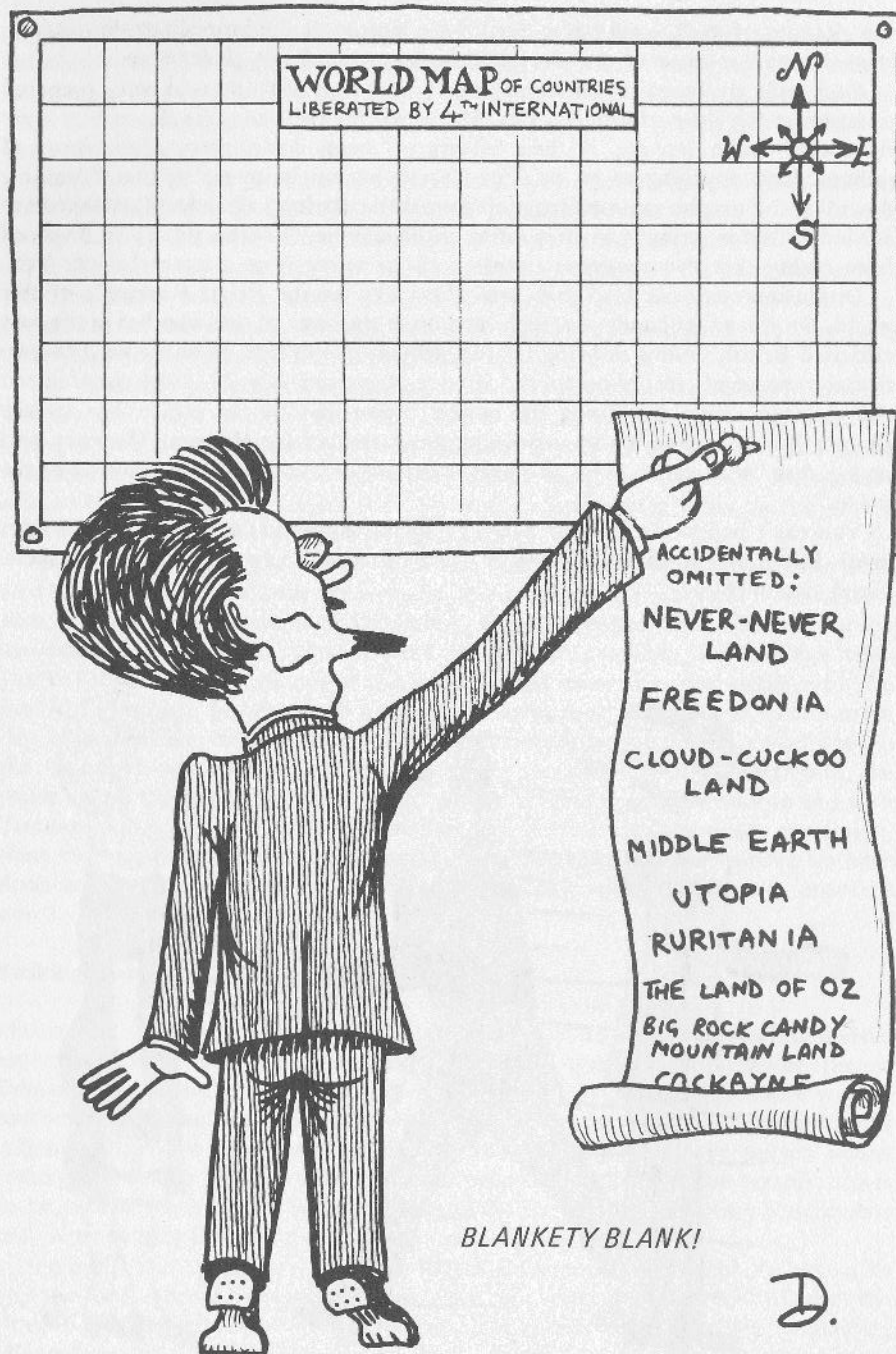
the chances of such a call being heeded (at least with the immediacy demanded), were the same as those of the proverbial cat or snowball in a place below.

Such calls are based on the cloud-cuckoo-land view of workers as being prepared to strike at the drop of a hat—a view shared by the right wing media, and by some right-wing union leaders, if their efforts to damp down every slight show of militancy are anything to go by. But Trotskyists ought to realise that "damping down" is the precise same effect their unrealistic clarion calls have. Continued unheeded calls for strikes can only bring disillusionment—unless you're so divorced from reality that you always see workers about to revolt no matter what the facts.

Disillusionment can lead you into the camp of the Roger Rosewells of this world. On the other hand, you might end up in the arms of one who has in the past criticised British unions as being far too willing (if only!) to go on strike. This particular gentleman, according to the *Sunday Mirror* on July 29, 1984, condemned the violence employed during the miners' strike—not by the police, but by the pickets. But he concluded by expressing much respect for Margaret Thatcher, and saying that "with such a wise and brave woman, Britain will find a solution to the strike."

You can't believe Trotskyists could go so far as to end up in the arms of such a man? But most of them are already there: that was Lech Walesa, the workers' friend, that was.





## Chapter 12

### Trotsky de-liberates

#### Uncommon nationalism?

Trotskyists consider themselves not merely champions of the working class, but of various sections of society that, though not in themselves classes, undergo specific oppression or share common characteristics, as well as of those nations oppressed and exploited by imperialism. There are exceptions: some are so obsessed with the class question that, in a parody of Marxism, they denounce every movement not led by the workers (or themselves). But for most, the championing of oppressed nations is taken to the point of contempt for one's own, and most Trotskyists would query the credentials as a revolutionary of the Russian author of the following lines:

"Is a sense of national pride alien to us, Great-Russian class conscious proletarians? Certainly not! We love our language and our country, and we are doing our very utmost to raise *her* toiling masses (i.e., nine-tenths of *her* population) to the level of a democratic and socialist consciousness . . . And, full of a sense of national pride, we Great-Russian workers want, come what may, a free and independent, a democratic, republican and proud Great Russia . . ."

Indeed, most Trotskyists would recoil with horror at the very thought of putting the concepts of patriotism and socialism side by side, and see the very idea as an in-



vention of the post-Lenin "Soviet bureaucracy". They would recoil in yet greater horror to find that the words quoted above are those of . . . Lenin! He was writing after the outbreak of the First World War, and naturally goes on (in "The National Pride of the Great Russians") to advocate the overthrow of tsarism as the best way of expressing patriotism.

So I shall be risking the wrath of any Trotskyist readers by dealing, before moving on to other questions of liberation, with a question of "national liberation" for Britain: the question of withdrawal from the European Economic Community. This is not purely a national question: the break-up of the EEC, even partially, would be a grave blow to the transnational corporations in whose interests it was set up to facilitate the free movement of capital and the more effective exploitation of the member states' neo-colonies as a result. Thus it would be of benefit to the peoples of all the member states, and indeed of those countries exploited by them.

Nevertheless, alongside these internationalist motives, what is wrong with having a sense of patriotism offended by matters affecting one's own country decided by an unelected transnational bureaucracy rather than by its own Government—even a bad Government? Plenty, I'm sure many Trotskyists would argue. And indeed, in the period when the Heath Government of 1970-74 was preparing for EEC entry, *Socialist Worker* (later, it's true, to change its tune) argued against opposing EEC membership—on the grounds of the opportunities it laid open for unity between the working classes of western Europe (as if non-membership of the EEC was a barrier to that.)

Yet while nowadays no Trotskyist would consider the EEC a Good Thing, there has been a near total retreat from the position of calling for a withdrawal that would at one time have been almost unanimously held. Martin Thomas of *Socialist Organiser*, for instance, in a letter to *Socialist Action* on August 18, 1983, described EEC withdrawal as "an empty gesture", and another member of his group in another letter went farther, describing it as a "rotten policy"; another letter described it as "an isolationist, little England position in practice". (*Spartacist Britain* also describes opponents of the EEC as "Little Englanders"; so do pro-EEC Tories, for that matter.)

Both letter-writers, and another in the same issue, refer to EEC withdrawal as a "nationalist diversion", the third writer arguing that the call for British withdrawal would hamper the development of international combine committees of trades unionists—without explaining why. The same writer describes opposition to "the process of European capitalist co-ordination" as "both reactionary and utopian"—which is what these arguments sound to me.

But if these diatribes were received by *Socialist Action* because of its own calls for withdrawal from what it had described as "The Bosses' Europe" (to which *Socialist Organiser* incredibly responds "Bosses' Britain, Bosses' Market, No Choice") those calls have since become sadly muted. In an article on February 10, 1984 ("Euro-elections and nuclear disarmament"), *Socialist Action* put forward "three tasks" for Labour Party members in the Euro-elections; all three were on "defence" questions and using the Assembly to speak out against nuclear weapons—commendable in itself, perhaps, but why no mention of withdrawal?

And an article in the paper's last issue before those Euro-elections ("Labour and

Europe: Intentions good, but action zilch"—I winced at the Americanism) contained one sentence—in a half page—mentioning in passing that withdrawal was Labour Party policy. Nowhere was it put forward as a campaigning issue.

Incidentally, that article stated that "in Germany last year, profits went up nine per cent and real wages dipped by four per cent." What they actually meant was in the *Federal Republic* of Germany (West Germany). In the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) real wages have only moved in one direction—up. The capitalist world refused to recognise the existence for more than two decades after its foundation in 1949; *Socialist Action*, it would appear, still refuses to.

Failure to put forward withdrawal from the EEC as a campaigning demand is also true of *Militant*, whose "What We Stand For" does include the demand "Opposition to the capitalist Common Market. For a Socialist United States of Europe as a step towards a World Socialist Federation", but whose "opposition" does not include a clear demand for withdrawal.

It seems that as the Labour right (and sadly much of its left) has quietly dropped the Conference policy on this issue, the Trotskyists have gone along with them unusually compliantly (although "justifying" their position with "left" noises as with *Socialist Organiser*.) I prefer Labour's official (if forgotten) policy; and it would seem that the logical conclusion from it would be to not even contest the "elections" to the farcical and powerless European Parliament. But although not even most Labour candidates contested the 1984 Euro-elections on a straight anti-EEC platform, the majority of Trotskyists (including Paul Foot in *Socialist Worker*) advocating voting for them.

*Militant* did this particularly craftily: the only mention in their last issue prior to June 14 was a 4-paragraph article calling for a Labour vote and "a Socialist Europe". The next week, a lengthy article lambasting the EEC for all its faults (and its very basis) and its sham Parliament in such a way as would have guaranteed an abstention by *Militant* readers had it been published a week earlier. Then they had told us that "abstentions will only help the Tories and the Alliance". I can't agree: a call for a mass abstention by Labour would have resulted in a vote even more derisory of the EEC than did occur. Nor do I feel that the embarrassment to the Tories by Labour's increased vote was an unmixed blessing; it showed that more people had been won to the illusion of the Euro-parliament as a "real" body—and Labour had sadly helped foster that illusion. Strange, though, to see the Trotskyists joining in.

(Incidentally, the Posadists' *Red Flag* added one word to *Militant*'s slogan when it spoke of the United *Soviet* Socialist States of Europe. It was not quite so silly as to suggest this as a realistic demand at present, but called for a Labour vote as a step towards it. It's doubtful if the minority of Labour supporters who bothered to vote realised they were doing so on this basis.)

### The notion of nation

Let's move on to those nations whose right to be liberated is unquestionably greater than that of our own (though, of course, for us to assist their liberation is also to assist our own, for, as Marx argued, no nation that oppresses another can itself be



free.) So perhaps we should turn first to the instance that Marx had particularly in mind: Britain's oppression of Ireland.

As with the question of the EEC, there's been a remarkable dilution of the approach to the Irish question among Trotskyist groups in recent years. There are exceptions, of course; those who demand freedom for the Irish in such a way as to rouse opposition to rather than support for Irish independence. The Revolutionary Communist Party's slogan referred to earlier, "Bring the War to Britain", did just that—in such a way that the Irish were bound to be the losers (not to mention Tameside Trades Council). Both RCP and RCG stick to more or less unconditional support for the national liberation of the Irish people as a whole—even if, as I commented earlier, they do it on the basis of setting up phoney "solidarity campaigns" composed entirely of their own miniscule memberships, and as such of little use to the struggle for a free and united Ireland.

*Militant*, as I suggested earlier, doesn't recognise the existence of the Irish question, its 19-point platform in "What We Stand For" doesn't even mention it; and *Militant* is the only British Trotskyist paper to actually have a special monthly edition for Ireland, regarded by others, in my view rightly, as a separate country. *Militant's* solution for Ireland is not its national liberation from Britain (as laid down by *Militant's* supposed mentor Karl Marx), but the formation of a Labour Party in Ireland. One letter-writer to *Militant* even complained bitterly because a letter he had sent to "Information on Ireland" had been printed in Sinn Féin's *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

But while *Militant's* fellow entrists, the Socialist League, still stand fairly firmly on a position of Irish national liberation and unification, and support for Sinn Féin, some others have toned down their approach—particularly in the decade or more since the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Thus, at the time of the Harrods Xmas bombing of 1983, some Trotskyists rushed to condemn the IRA for a "barbarous act" and an "outrage against London workers" (*News Line*) before the IRA even had a chance to publicly announce that it had not authorised the bombing and had no intention of authorising attacks on non-Governmental civilian targets in Britain.

The SWP, at one time the "staunchest supporters" of the then Provisional IRA prior to the introduction of the PTA, nowadays condemn actions by their former heroes, and have dropped all attempts at building a solidarity movement with the Irish people:

"It is impossible to build a real movement against British repression in Northern Ireland . . . We cannot build a mass movement on Ireland. All we can do is attempt to rebuild the confidence and organisation of the British workers to fight Thatcher. In that process we can win our arguments on Ireland." (1983 Conference resolutions.)

The SWP claims to be "virtually alone in approaching Ireland as a class question." If by that they mean doing nothing about that island's national liberation from British imperialism, they're wrong: just add the demand for an Irish Labour Party and it's the same line as *Militant*. (They're also close to the hoary old

Trotskyist view that the best way to preserve peace/aid others' national liberation is to take your own people forward to socialism—that is, do nothing about it).

But the SWP are wrong when they say that it's "impossible" to build a solidarity movement in Britain on the question of Ireland. What it is is *bloody difficult*; the nearer to home a country suffering from your own imperialism, the harder it is to win your own people for the struggle of others. But "difficult" and "impossible" have never been grouped together in any Dictionary of Synonyms; it just means harder, longer, more patient and dedicated work—but it's a vital question to tackle nevertheless; what the SWP are doing is to "justify" running away from it rather than facing it. I'm reminded of the SWP member I knew who got a job in a non-union factory, but quit three months later because he hadn't managed to get them all organised and out on strike. What did he expect—miracles?

### Ho Ho not so funny

Struggles around the world against even more blatant repressions fare little better at the hands of the Trotskyists. For instance, much of the rebirth of Trotskyism in Britain, particularly among students, in 1967-68, was based on the struggle against the Vietnam War. It was a struggle in which the Trotskyists knew best—and that meant better than the National Liberation Front.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, largely comprising the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists, didn't ask much of you (apart from a willingness to battle with the police) other than to subscribe to the slogan that was the acid test of your "solidarity": "Victory to the NLF". (Sometimes this was given as "Victory to the Vietcong", the last word being a contraction of "Vietnamese Communist Party" invented by the CIA to hide the broad, united character of the NLF—with the able assistance of some Trotskyists.)

Forget the fact that the NLF itself was asking for people in Britain to put forward the slogan of British dissociation from the US war—those of us collecting petitions along those lines were denounced as liberals, when we foolishly thought "solidarity" meant doing what those you were backing asked of you. Equally suspect was collecting for medical aid, bicycles and other assistance for the NLF. One Trotskyist told me he'd give money if we were buying machine guns—never mind the awkward facts that we were hardly in a position to buy them, and that the Vietnamese hadn't asked for them.

But now we're told it was all for nothing. Paul Foot of the SWP wrote in *New Socialist*, January/February 1984, that

"I can't recall a single revolutionary socialist who had a single illusion about what would happen to poor Vietnam after the war. We all supported the Vietnamese in their war against the Americans. But no-one . . . honestly believed that a poverty-stricken peasantry ravaged by years of war and still besieged and hated by the US could build anything at all, let alone socialism."

I've got a bit of news for you Paul: some of us did and do. Vietnam's road to socialism is no easy one, but they're marching down it with or without your



approval. (No doubt those who think that way don't qualify in your eyes as revolutionary socialists, but they're the only sort I know of.)

It was Mr Foot's SWP who disrupted one solidarity meeting in Britain in the 1960s when their representative accused Ho Chi Minh of having "butchered thousands of Trotskyist trade unionists"—a claim not only groundless but decidedly wishful-thinking. *Thousands* of Trotskyist trade unionists? Come off it—there's no such phenomenon.

Tariq Ali, in his retrospective book on 1968, opens his chapter on Vietnam by insultingly accusing the Vietnamese Workers' Party (which he, in typical Fleet Street fashion, calls the Communist Party) of dividing the workers, toadying to the British occupation in 1945 and being servilely subservient to the USSR. Perhaps they should be grateful for not being accused of any massacres.

#### Intervening in Latin America

Nicaragua is too recently liberated for any such accusations to be popular. Nevertheless, the fact that its people only recently came out of a bloody war unleashed on them by the late dictator Somoza, and that they daily face the threat of a US intervention that would make Grenada look like a picnic, cannot exempt them from the "friendly criticism" of the Trotskyists.

The Sandinistas, *the next step* tells us (November 1984), "accommodate all down the line" with imperialism. According to *Militant*, they "refuse to mobilise their mass support to expropriate capitalism" (November 16, 1984)—as opposed to the Trotskyists who, according to the Spartacists (*Women and Revolution*, Winter 1983-4), "fight to expropriate the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie as a class."

They must be doing it by remote control, for there's no evidence of any Trotskyist movement in the beleaguered Central American republic. The Sparts foolishly admit that fact by adding their list of "demands" over Nicaragua the call "For a Trotskyist Party in Nicaragua!" (their exclamation point). Despite this instruction, the Nicaraguan people appear not to have felt the crying need for such a party. Nor have the people of El Salvador or Sri Lanka, to whom—no doubt among others—the Spartacists address the same silly demand.

Apart from telling the USSR to supply Migs that the Sandinistas haven't asked for and demanding the formation of parties no-one wants to join, the Spartacists do little beyond sloganising in support of Nicaragua—if one can call the lengthy attack on the Sandinista Government in the journal referred to above as "support". You might be forgiven for expecting some better backing for a people who have thrown off dictatorship. You might make the same mistake in expecting support from Trotskyists for a people who have languished under another for a dozen years.

When Trotskyists aren't aiding the people of Chile by telling them that the "armed road" is the only road, they're criticising their efforts to overthrow the Pinochet dictatorship. In fact, according to a headline in *Workers Power* (August 30, 1984)—"Reformism delays Pinochet's fall"—it's those efforts that prolong the dictatorship.

It's no doubt the fault of the communists. After all, according to Tariq Ali's 1978 book, "The Communist Party had, since the thirties, been a party of abject

class collaboration." Mr Ali was writing of the period prior to Salvador Allende's Popular Unity Government; a period in which the Chilean Communist Party had spent twelve years underground and seen thousands of its members killed or locked up. Some collaboration! Maybe they *asked* to be jailed.

*Militant*, true to form, has its own peculiar way of assisting the people of Chile: it set up its own sectarian "solidarity" organisation, the "Chile Socialist Defence Campaign", in competition with the long-standing broad campaigning organisation—the Chile Solidarity Campaign. And a very lengthy article on the question of solidarity with Chile in *Militant* on September 14, 1984, ingeniously managed not to include a single reference to CSC (in which the LPYS had actually, in a rare burst of non-sectarianism, worked for some time before realising they couldn't take it over.) They had similarly, in the days of Franco Spain, set up a "Spanish Young Socialists Defence Campaign"—as if other sections weren't equally deserving of support, and as if a broad campaign uniting different groups in Britain wouldn't in any case have been more use to the LPYS' Spanish comrades as well as all of Franco's victims.

#### A trot around Africa

In another continent struggling to free itself from imperialism, similar Trotskyist "support" goes to the people of South Africa. According to "*Labour Review*", the mis-named monthly of the WRP, in May 1984.

"The ANC (African National Congress) has a petty bourgeois leadership which is schooled in class collaboration, reformism, parliamentary roads to socialism and peaceful co-existence with imperialism. They would rather fawn around the feet of the bourgeois regimes than organise the revolutionary overthrow of the apartheid regime."

This is written of an organisation many of whose leaders are in jail for participating in armed struggle, and which is fighting apartheid gun and bomb in hand! And just who are the WRP to accuse anyone of having a "petty-bourgeois leadership"? Some pot to call a kettle black! (Except the ANC's "blackness" refers only to the colour of most of its members' skins.)

A similar line was taken in a leaflet distributed at the 1984 annual general meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement by the Spartacists. Its saving grace was that with both of its A4 sides covered in close print it looked so boring that very few people are likely to have bothered to read it. Those who did will have come across its suggestion that the demand for the closure of the South African Embassy in London is no more than an attempt to "prettify British imperialism". Hardly. It might make it look a little less ugly, but our chagrin at that would be more than compensated by the lift it would give South Africa's black majority for whom such a closure—pretty, ugly or otherwise—would be nothing but a victory.

The liberated countries of Africa fare little better at the hands of the Trotskyists. "National demagogues" is the polite label attached to Robert Mugabe and the founder of free Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, by the Spartacists, who also airily dismiss the MPLA Government of Angola as "Luanda's bourgeois-nationalist regime"—fine



aid to a country facing the attacks of the apartheid regime and its UNITA stooges. Why bother supporting them at all?

Even such unhelpful help has been unforthcoming from the Trotskyists in the case of Ethiopia. Their unanimous backing has gone to the Eritrean separatists—a unanimity shared by the dictatorships in Sudan and Saudi Arabia which, together with the United States, are the main suppliers and supporters of the so-called “liberation movements”. Some even went so far as to condemn Ethiopia’s use of armed force—to defend itself against the Somali invasion of 1977-78. Long before Ethiopia hit the headlines as a result of drought and famine, the Spartacists (in February 1980) were referring to its Government as “the blood-drenched genocidal bonapartist Derg”. There’s no reason to suppose that they aren’t still doing so.

The point isn’t that the liberated countries of Africa, or anywhere else, are perfect—they aren’t. It’s a question, though, of how best to aid their struggles against imperialism and their efforts at the reconstruction of their societies along non-capitalist lines. Continual sniping at real or imagined shortcomings has never been the best way to win people to back independence for countries freeing themselves from imperialism—and in fact it sometimes sounds dangerously like the old adage about such peoples “not being able to govern themselves” and “not ready for democracy”. But with all their weaknesses, the newly-freed nations are in most cases actually *doing* something about changing society—a charge not to be levelled at their Trotskyist detractors.

#### From minority groups . . .

From the briefest of whistle stop tours (a thousand more examples could be cited) of countries with black majorities, let’s briefly examine the role of Trotskyism in a country with a black minority—our own. And in particular, let’s look at a party with a black minority—the Labour Party.

The controversy over the issue of black sections within the Labour Party continues to rage—with valid arguments on both sides. The conclusion of *the next step* (November 1984) that “its outcome is irrelevant to the problems facing black people” probably owes more to the Revolutionary Communist Party’s anti-Labourism than to sober analysis. Not that its anti-Labour sentiments have prevented the RCP in the past from claiming support from Labour leaders for its “anti-racist” antics, such as its march against the 1982 TUC. Ken Livingstone and Rodney Bickerstaffe were listed amongst the “sponsors” of this absurd gimmick—though nobody had actually bothered to ask them.

But on the question of black sections, it has to be said that the positions adopted by the various Trotskyist groupings within the Labour Party itself seem more tied up with their own interests rather than those of black people, Labour Party members or otherwise. Put bluntly, *Militant* is against, *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Organiser* are for. The reason isn’t far to seek. *Militant* is opposed to any sort of autonomous organisation, preferring instead to stage-manage its own “LPYS Black Youth Conferences”, which it can be fairly sure will toe the *Militant* line. By the same token, or the other side of it, their less influential rival Trotskyists see black sections as a Trojan Horse into the territory of *Militant*.

Don’t just take my word for it. Read the words of *Socialist Action* (July 27, 1984):

“By making the youth section of the Labour Party habitable to young black people [by creating black sections]—by taking up their campaigns and espousing their rights—the LPYS can grow in strength as well as in size . . .”

Is it reading too much into that to see that the part of the LPYS they want to see growing is the minority section under their own control? But if my charges of sectarianism in this instance aren’t an open and shut case, I’ve little doubt over the verdict in the case of *Militant* versus The Black People of Liverpool. The appointment of Sam Bond, a building surveyor with Brent council in London as Liverpool’s race relations chief was the most shameless piece of Trotskyist elitism even by *Militant*’s standards—and that’s saying something. Mr Bond’s two—and only—qualifications for the job were his black skin (a valid enough point) and his support for *Militant*. His knowledge and experience in the field of the post to which he was appointed come to a round figure—zero.

Actually, “shameless” may be going a bit too far, because deputy council leader Derek Hatton was clearly embarrassed when his office was besieged on October 10, 1984, by members of the black community protesting about the appointment—so embarrassed that he agreed to cancel it (an agreement promptly forgotten once he regained control of his office). *Militant*’s response to the protest was to accuse those involved in it of being unrepresentative of the black community. It would be cynical to ask whether Mr Bond and Cllr Hatton were *more* representative. What isn’t so easy is for *Militant* to brand the local members of the union NALGO, who refused to co-operate with Mr Bond because of “irregularities” in his appointment, as “unrepresentative”. The outcome of the whole case is awaited as I write, but one thing’s certain: *Militant* isn’t going to come out of it smelling of roses, red or any other colour.

#### . . . to less small ones

Two other groups in our society experiencing particular problems peculiar to themselves hardly qualify as minorities: women and young people between them constitute about three quarters of the population of Great Britain.

It would be criminal of me to dismiss women—half the world—with a brief mention, if it were not for the fact that nowadays that’s what the Trotskyists do. The growth of the largely middle-class women’s liberation movement in the 1970s provided a certain amount of fertile ground for Trotskyists to grow in—they could actually *do* something. Its decline after the granting (on paper, admittedly, rather than in reality) of a number of the movement’s demands left little for the Trotskyists to latch on to. They have no influence over the two truly significant developments of the 1980s for women: Greenham Common and the miners’ wives’ movement. (It’s true that miners’ wives have been seen to carry the “Victory to the Miners” posters left lying around in hundreds by the SWP, but often, as with the



women's London demo in the summer of 1984, with the name of the SWP torn off at the top.)

Thus women are often consigned to the theoretical journals of the Trotskyist groups or honoured with an annual International Women's Day article in their papers. Even the group with probably the highest proportion of women members, the RCP, seems only to be interested in "revolutionary communist women"; and a fairly prevalent attitude is the one expressed in *Socialist Worker* on March 10, 1984: "it is only through fighting for socialism that working women can hope to overcome their oppression". Thus, as so often, a generalised and progressive-sounding truth is used as a cover for the fact that they're not actually *doing* anything. (Not even publishing their women's journal, which disappeared at the same time as the SWP's "rank and file" publications.)

Youth papers do, though, continue to be published, intermittently or otherwise, by many Trotskyist groups. There's *Class Fighter*, *Revolution*, *Socialist Youth* (LPYS) and *Young Socialist* (Healyite). The last-named is largely filled with football, pop music and puzzles—plus the even more puzzling WRP brand of Trotskyism. The LPYS variety is rarely seen as its supporters are too busy selling *Militant*; readers will have come across examples of the contents of the other two publications in earlier chapters. In the main these papers differ little from their "adult" counterparts other than in a rather self-conscious attempt to be "youthful".

Organisation among young people, however, remains limited. *Militant* confines itself to setting up "broad" bodies, indistinguishable from the LPYS, such as the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (chairman: *Militant* MP Dave Nellist—not exactly of YTS age) and the WRP has its own "youth training scheme" as referred to earlier. A growing battleground, though, is the section of youth among whom Trotskyists formerly flourished—the students.

It can no longer be said, as Chris Harman of the SWP did in 1968, that "students have contributed more than any other social group to this change in the political climate". In fact, it could only be said then with a fair bit of disregard for reality. But Trotskyists do not intend to take the decline in the influence of "revolutionary students" (i.e., Trotskyists) lying down. Unfortunately for them, someone else won't lie down—even though their obituary was published in the SWP's *Socialist Review*. Its January-February issue in 1982 twice proclaimed "the collapse of NOLS". This was only weeks before NOLS—the non-Trotskyist National Organisation of Labour Students—swept the board at the conference of the National Union of Students.

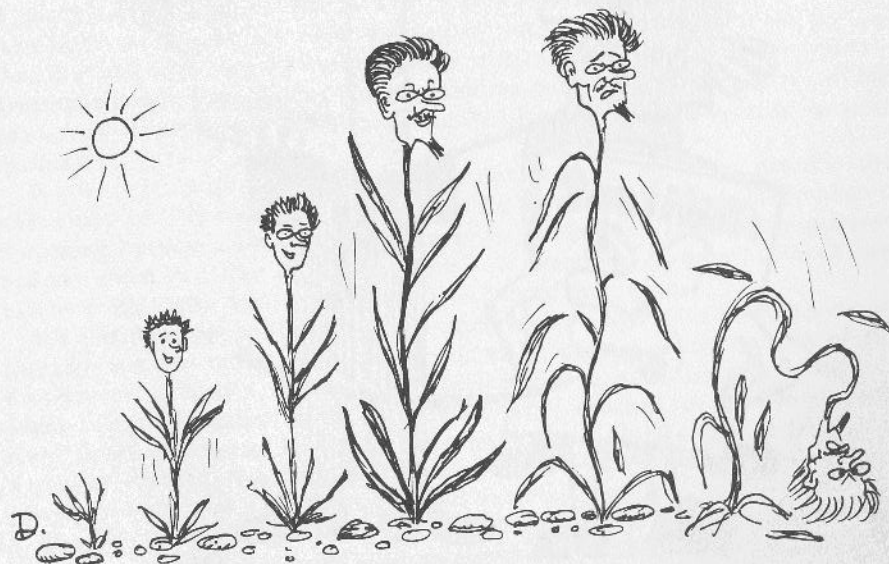
Trotskyist influence in NUS has declined to the point at which the election of a *Socialist Organiser* supporter as president of Durham University's (right-wing) students' union rates a major article plus photo in his paper, but for *Militant* the answer seems to be "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em"—or join them *and* beat them. That "beat" can be taken literally. The May, 1984, conference of NOLS had to be abandoned after *Militant* supporters, angry at their inability to wrest control from the "Clause 4" majority, resorted to physical assaults on the platform and non-Trotskyist delegates, in what the NOLS executive described as pre-planned and orchestrated violence.

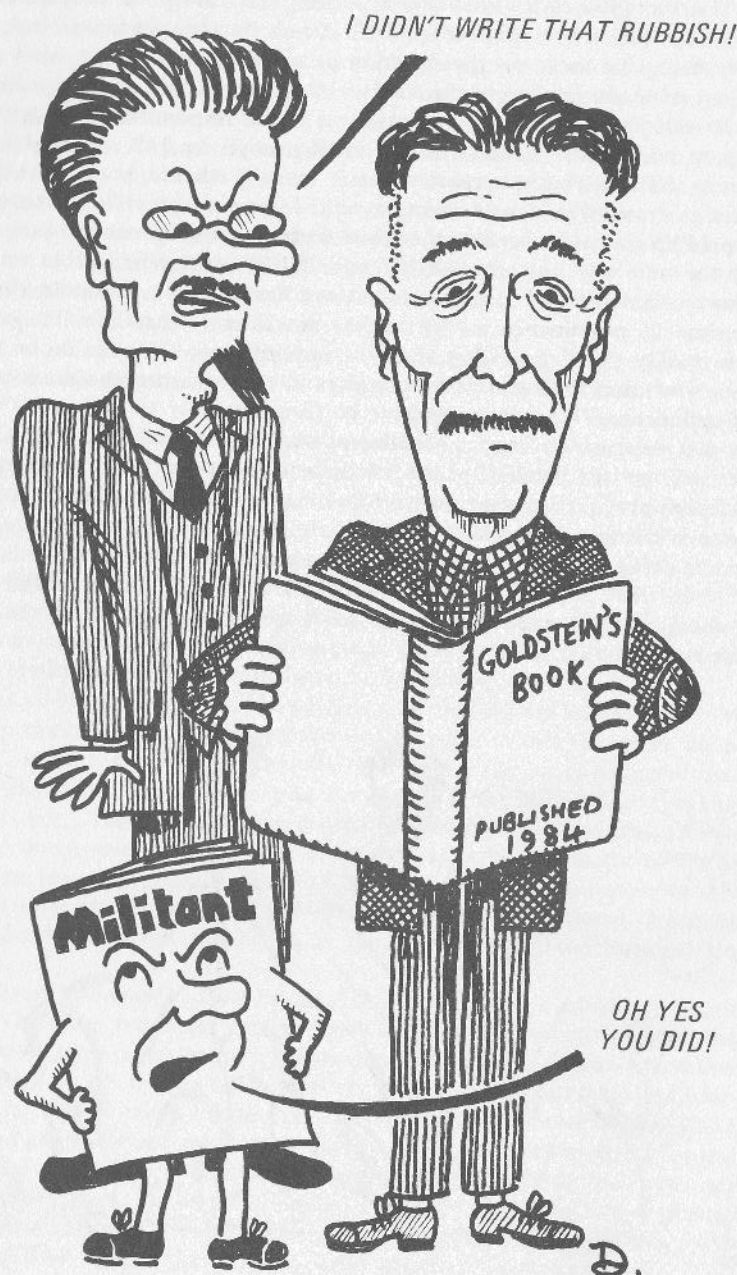
Joining and beating having had little success, *Militant* changed to splitting

tactics. No doubt assessing their chances among Further Education students as rather better than the student body as a whole, they held the "founding conference" of the "Further Education Labour Students" at Liverpool Polytechnic on November 10, 1984. Main speaker . . . Cllr Derek Hatton! An article in *Militant* really gave the game away on the question as to whether the new group was to oppose Tory education policy or the National Organisation of Labour Students: its reply to its self-posed question "But surely it is the responsibility of the NOLS leadership to build those links [with the labour movement]?" contains not one reference to NOLS. That's because what it actually should read is *NUS*. The Freudian slip shows who's really being attacked; or perhaps *Militant*, so used to setting up LPYS bodies and calling them broad campaigns, expects everyone else to behave in the same way, and sees "NOLS" and "NUS" as interchangeable.

This sort of infighting is unlikely to restore Trotskyism to what it sees as its rightful place of prominence in the student movement. What it is likely to do, though, is muddy the water and confuse the opposition to Tory attacks on further and higher education so that we find ourselves in the embarrassing situation where the main opponents of Tory cuts appear to be Tory "wets".

But if this playing into Tory hands takes us back to the Trotskyist renaissance in the youth and student "revolt" of the 1960s, one final point needs to be added. If the Trotskyists provide no way forward for young people, it must be admitted that no-one else is doing a particularly brilliant job of it either. As long as the labour movement is doing nothing—or next to it—for a generation facing a worse fate than any before it, there will be fertile ground for Trotskyism. (Or, more like it, the stony ground of the parable, where the seeds sprang up rapidly only to wither even more rapidly).





## In place of a conclusion

Trotsky and 1984 . . . or, well . . .

It might have been hoped that the end of 1984 would have seen the end of "Nineteen Eighty-Four"; but the award-winning film at the end of the year put paid to that. But the year itself had seen glowing eulogies to George Orwell in numerous Trotskyist publications, hailing him as a kindred spirit; particularly *Militant*, which ran a whole series on the author and described him as "not anti-socialist but anti-Stalinist".

It was left, surprisingly, to the Socialist Workers Party to describe the philosophy of "Nineteen Eighty-Four" as "the politics of apathetic miserablism". Surprising, because a 1969 issue of the same journal in which that remark appeared had contained Part One of "George Orwell: International Socialist" (though part two never appeared; perhaps they'd already changed their minds).

It's also surprising in that for once I agree with the SWP. The book is so transparently anti-communist, and crudely so, with its physical descriptions of Big Brother and Goldstein as Stalin and Trotsky, and its nonsense such as tobacco falling out of cigarettes not held horizontal (rashly retained for the film version). And "Goldstein's Book" is such an inept reworking of Trotskyism that Trotskyists should be insulted. Not even Trotsky would present the Marxist theory of class struggle as a series of "middles" taking over from the "top".

But the main point about the book (and "Animal Farm") is that it presents class society in one form or another as *inevitable*; and revolution, though nice in theory,



as doomed to defeat. Despite Winston Smith's words, Orwell clearly saw no hope in "the proles". But then this is a similarity rather than a difference from Trotskyism.

In one of the interminable Orwell commentaries that graced our TV screens during the famous year, Malcolm Muggeridge was asked if communists would say that whatever Orwell's political intentions, his book acted in the interests of the right rather than the left. His "yes" implied not only that this is the communist view, but that it was correct—though unlike the communists, he seemed to welcome the prospect. If 1984 was a year of "left intentions" aiding the right, it should have provoked a more self-critical approach from those proponents of the practice—the Trotskyists.

#### Last words

I'm not going to try and make one big generalisation from all the foregoing chapters. I've probably overdone the job of hammering home my own view of Trotskyism along the way, and so, to cease being repetitious, I'll leave you to draw your own final conclusions.

Except to say again that the purpose of this book hasn't been mere Trot-bashing. It's been to give those who have come across the negative influence of Trotskyism and Trotskyists in the peace, labour and progressive movements a wider, if not exhaustive, view of the subject. I'm sure at times I've seemed negative, but my aim has been to encourage a positive fight for peace and socialism—and that requires an understanding of the disruptive and destructive nature of Trotskyist ultra-leftism.

"During the next ten years, the programme of the Fourth International will become the guide of millions," said Trotsky in 1938. In a lot more than ten years, it hasn't—but it's misled a fair few. In the same period, more than a dozen countries have begun to build socialism and the people of the socialist countries have raised themselves to levels previously inconceivable; many countries have thrown off colonial domination; the workers of the capitalist world have built their organisation to incomparably higher levels and struggled successfully to improve the lot of all working people; countless millions over the world have joined the most vital struggle in the world's history, the fight for peace, and all of this without the doubtful assistance of Lev Davidovitch Bronstein.

Trotsky hasn't changed the world, but millions are doing so. Why not join them now?

## APPENDIX I

### LENIN'S "SECRET" TESTAMENT

#### I LETTER TO THE CONGRESS

I would urge strongly that at this Congress a number of changes be made in our political structure. I want to tell you of the considerations to which I attach most importance.

At the head of the list I set an increase in the number of Central Committee members to a few dozen or even a hundred. It is my opinion that without this reform our Central Committee would be in great danger if the course of events were not quite favourable for us (and that it will be something we cannot count on).

Then, I intend to propose that the Congress should on certain conditions invest the decisions of the State Planning Commission with legislative force, meeting, in this respect, the wishes of Comrade Trotsky—to a certain extent and on certain conditions.

As for the first point, i.e., the increase in the number of CC members, I think it must be done in order to raise the prestige of the Central Committee, to do a thorough job of improving our administrative machinery and to prevent conflicts between small sections of the CC from acquiring excessive importance for the future of the Party.

It seems to me that our Party has every right to demand from the working class 50 to 100 CC members, and that it could get them from it without undue strain on the resources of that class.

Such a reform would considerably increase the stability of our Party and ease its struggle in the encirclement of hostile states, which, in my opinion, is likely to, and must, become much more acute in the next few years. I think that the stability of our Party would gain a thousandfold by such a measure.

Lenin  
December 23, 1922

#### II

Continuation of the notes.  
December 24, 1922

By stability of the Central Committee of which I spoke above, I mean measures against a split, as far as such measures can at all be taken. For, of course, the white-guard in *Russkaya Mysl* (it seems to have been S F Oldenburg) was right when, first, he banked on a split in our Party in the whiteguards' game against Soviet Russia, and when, secondly, he banked on grave differences in our Party to cause that split.

Our Party relies on two classes and therefore its instability would be possible and its downfall inevitable if there were no agreement between those two classes. In that event this or that measure, and generally all talk about the stability of our CC, would be futile. No measures of any kind would be able to prevent a split in such a case. But I hope that this is too remote a future and too improbable an event to talk about it.

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the immediate future, and I intend to deal here with a few ideas concerning personal qualities.

I think from this standpoint the prime factors in the question of stability are such members of the CC as Stalin and Trotsky. I think relations between them make up the greater half of the danger of a split, which could be avoided, and the avoidance of which, in my opinion, would be served, among other things by increasing the number of CC members to 50 or 100.

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution. Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand, as his struggle against the CC on the question of the People's Commissariat for Railways has already proved, is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man in the present CC, but he takes things with excessive self-assurance, and shows excessive enthusiasm for the purely administrative side of the work.

These two qualities of the two outstanding leaders of the present CC can unconsciously lead to a split, and if our Party does not take steps to avert this, the split may come unexpectedly.

I shall not give any further appraisals of the personal qualities of other members of the CC. I shall just recall that the October episode with Zinoviev and Kamenev was, of course, no accident, but neither can the blame for it be laid upon him personally, any more than non-Bolshevism can upon Trotsky.

Speaking of the young CC members, I wish to say a few words about Bukharin and Pyatakov. They are, in my opinion, the most outstanding figures (among the youngest ones), and the following must be borne in mind about them: Bukharin is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the Party. He is also rightly considered the favourite of the whole Party, but his theoretical views can be classified only with great reserve as fully Marxist, for there is something scholastic about him (he never learned, and, I think, never fully understood dialectics).

December 25. As for Pyatakov, he is unquestionably a man of outstanding will and outstanding ability, but shows too much enthusiasm for administering and the administrative side of the work to be relied on in a serious political matter.

Both of these remarks, of course, are made only for the present, on the assumption that both these outstanding and devoted Party workers do not find an occasion to enhance their knowledge and amend their one-sidedness.

Lenin  
December 25, 1922

#### ADDITION TO THE LETTER OF DECEMBER 24, 1922

Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealing among us Communists, becomes intolerable in a General Secretary. That is why I suggest that the comrades think about a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing somebody else differing in all other respects from Comrade Stalin solely in the degree of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and more considerate to the comrades, less capricious, etc. This circumstance may appear to be a negligible detail. But I think that from the standpoint of safeguards against a split and from the standpoint of what I wrote above about the mutual relations between Stalin and Trotsky it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.

Lenin  
January 4, 1923

#### III

Continuation of the notes.  
December 26, 1922

The increase in the number of CC members to 50 or even 100 must, in my opinion, serve a double or even a treble purpose: the more members there are in the CC, the more its work will be studied and less danger there will be of a split due to some indiscretion. The enlistment of many workers to the CC will help the workers to improve our administrative machinery, which is far from perfect. We inherited it, in effect from the old regime, for it was absolutely impossible to reorganise it in such a short time, especially considering the war, famine, etc. That is why those "critics" who point to the defects of our administrative machinery out of mockery or malice, may be calmly answered that they do not in the least understand the conditions of the revolution today. It is altogether impossible in five years to reorganise the machinery adequately, especially in the conditions in which our revolution took place. It is enough that in five years we have created a new type of state in which the workers are leading the peasants against the bourgeoisie; and in a hostile international environment this in itself is a gigantic achievement. But the knowledge of this must on no account hide from us the fact that, in effect, we took over the old machinery of state from the tsar and the bourgeoisie and that now, with the onset of peace and the satisfaction of the minimum requirements against famine, all our work must be directed towards improving the administrative machinery.

It seems to me that a few dozen workers, being members of the CC, can deal better than anybody with the testing, improving and remodelling of our state apparatus. The Workers' and Peasants' Inspection, on whom this function devolved at the beginning, unable to cope with it and can be used only as an "appendage" or, on certain conditions, as an assistant to these members of the CC. The workers admitted to the Central Committee must not, in my opinion, come mainly from among those who have had long service in Soviet bodies (in this part of my letter



the term workers everywhere includes peasants), because those workers have already acquired the very traditions and the very prejudices which it is desirable to combat.

The working-class members of the CC must be mainly workers of a lower stratum than those promoted in the last five years to work in Soviet bodies; they must be people closer to being rank-and-file workers and peasants, and who are not of the category of direct or indirect exploiters. I think that by attending all sittings of the CC and all sittings of the Political Bureau, and by reading all the documents of the CC, such workers can form a staff of devoted supporters of the Soviet system, able, first, to give stability to the CC itself, and second, to work effectively on the renewal and improvement of the state apparatus.

Lenin  
December 26, 1922

#### APPENDIX B

"We consider it our duty openly to confess before the party that in the struggle for our opinions, we and our followers have in a number of cases since the fourteenth congress taken steps that were a violation of party discipline and transgressed in the direction of factionalism the boundaries set by the party for intra-party ideological struggle. Considering these steps unconditionally mistaken, we declare that we conclusively renounce factional methods of defending our opinions, in view of the danger of these methods to the unity of the party, and we summon to a like renunciation all comrades sharing our views. We call for the immediate dissolution of all factional groups formed around the opinions of the 'Opposition'. We likewise acknowledge that by our actions in Moscow and Leningrad in October [the appeal to the factories] we violated the decree of the Central Committee forbidding discussions throughout the Soviet Union, and that we undertook them against the decree of the Central Committee . . . We consider absolutely unpermissible the direct or indirect support of the factionalism of any and all groups in the different sections of the Communist International against the line of the International, whether the group of Souvarine in France, Maslow-Fischer, Uhrbans, in Germany, Bordiga in Italy, or any other group—regardless of their attitude to our opinions. We consider especially unpermissible any support whatever to the activities of persons already excluded from the parties in the Communist International . . . We express the firm hope that the actual cessation of factional struggle on the part of the Opposition will make it possible for expelled comrades, having acknowledged their mistake in the matter of violating party discipline and the interests of party unity, to return to the ranks of the party; and we therewith promise the party all possible co-operation in its liquidation of factional struggle and its struggle against a recurrence of such violations of discipline."

Signed by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Yevdokimov, and published in Pravda, October 18, 1926.

"The entire history of Bolshevism was one of free struggle of tendencies and

factions. In different periods, Bolshevism passed through the struggle of pro- and anti-boycottists, 'otzovists', ultimacists, conciliationists, partisans of 'proletarian culture', partisans and opponents of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, left-communists, partisans and opponents of the official military policy, etc., etc. The Bolshevik Central Committee never dreamed of demanding that an opponent 'abandon factional methods', if the opponent held that the policy of the Central Committee was false. Patience and loyalty toward the opposition were among the most important traits of Lenin's leadership.

"It is true that the Bolshevik Party forbade factions at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, a time of mortal danger. One can argue whether or not this was correct. The subsequent course of development has in any case proved that this prohibition served as one of the starting points of the party's degeneration. The bureaucracy presently made a bogie of the concept of 'faction', so as not to permit the party either to think or breathe. Thus was formed the totalitarian regime which killed Bolshevism.

" . . . The Fourth International has never prohibited factions and has no intention of doing so. Factions have existed and do exist among us. Controversy occurs always over the content of the ideas of each faction, but never over its right to existence. From the standpoint of Bolshevik ideas on party democracy I would consider it an outright scandal to accuse an opponent, who happened to be in the minority, of employing 'factional' methods, instead of engaging in discussion with him over the gist of the question. If the differences are serious ones then factional methods are justified. If the differences are not serious, then the adversary will find himself discredited. The factional struggle can result only in a more profound principled fusion or a split. No one yet has invented another alternative, if we leave aside the totalitarian regimes."

Leon Trotsky  
Writings 1938-39 (p. 131)

#### APPENDIX C

Extract from the draft resolution on party unity, 10th party congress, March, 1921.

" . . . All class-conscious workers must clearly realise that factionalism of any kind is harmful and impermissible, for no matter how members of individual groups may desire to safeguard Party unity, factionalism in practice inevitably leads to the weakening of team-work and to intensified and repeated attempts by the enemies of the governing Party, who have wormed their way into it, to widen the cleavage and use it for counter-revolutionary purposes.

" . . . The Congress, therefore, hereby declares dissolved and orders the immediate dissolution of all groups formed on the basis of one platform or another . . . Non-observance of this decision of the Congress shall entail unconditional and instant expulsion from the Party."

Lenin  
131

## GLOSSARY of Trotskyist organisations and publications

All Trades Union Alliance: the "Industrial Department" of the Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 Balham Group, The: the first (1932) Trotskyist group in Britain.  
 Black Dwarf: first (monthly) publication of the International Marxist Group, edited by Tariq Ali.  
 Bolshevik Faction of the Fourth International: set up in Argentina in 1978 by Nahuel Moreno; later united with Pierre Lambert's Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International in the Parity Committee (or International Committee) for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.  
 Chile Socialist Defence Campaign: body set up by the Revolutionary Socialist League in opposition to the Chile Solidarity Campaign.  
 Class Fighter: irregular youth paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance.  
 East London Workers Against Racism: group set up and controlled by the Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Fight Racism Fight Imperialism: monthly paper of the Revolutionary Communist Group.  
 Fourth International (Posadist): breakaway led by Juan Posadas, head of the Latin American Bureau of the Fourth International in 1963. British section: the Revolutionary Workers Party.  
 Further Education Labour Students: group set up in opposition to National Organisation of Labour Students, by Revolutionary Socialist League in 1984.  
 Group, The: 1950s group headed by Gerry Healy, now of the Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 Hands Off Ireland: publication of the Revolutionary Communist Group.  
 International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International: unification in 1980 of Lambert's Organising Committee and Moreno's Bolshevik Faction. British section: Socialist Labour Group.  
 International Committee of the Fourth International: set up by Gerry Healy and others in 1953 in opposition to Michael Pablo's Fourth International. British section: Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 International-Communist League: left International Socialism in early 1970s as "Workers Fight" faction; published Workers Fight, followed by Workers Action. After brief unity with Workers Power (1975-76) entered Labour Party; later united with the Workers Socialist League to form the Socialist Organiser Alliance in 1982.  
 International Marxist Group, predecessor of Socialist League.  
 International Socialism, predecessor of the Socialist Workers Party.  
 International Socialism: quarterly theoretical journal of Socialist Workers Party.  
 International Socialist: short-lived (1950s) group associated with Ted Grant (now of the Revolutionary Socialist League).  
 international Spartacist tendency: breakaway after "Unification Congress" set up United Secretariat of the Fourth International in 1963. British section: the Spartacists (aka Spartacist League).  
 Irish Freedom Movement: group set up and controlled by the Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Irish Solidarity Movement: group set up and controlled by the Revolutionary Communist Group.  
 Keep Left: paper published by Healy supporters within the (Labour Party) Young Socialists from 1960; after their expulsion in 1964, paper of the (Socialist Labour League—now Worker Revolutionary Party) Young Socialists, now titled Young Socialist.  
 Labour Review: monthly journal of the Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 Labour Worker: 1950s predecessor of Socialist Worker.  
 Latin American Bureau of Fourth International: see Fourth International (Posadist).  
 Marxist League: 1930s Trotskyist group associated with C L R James.  
 Militant: weekly (possibly by now bi-weekly) paper of the Revolutionary Socialist League.  
 Militant, The: publication of the 1930s Militant Group.  
 Militant Group: 1930s Trotskyist group.  
 Militant Group or Militant Tendency: public face of the Revolutionary Socialist League.  
 Movement for a revolutionary Communist International: late 1970s grouping of Trotskyist breakaways. British section: Workers Power.  
 National Rank and File Movement: now defunct organisation set up in 1974 by International Socialism (later Socialist Workers Party).

Newsletter, The: launched 1958 as "independent socialist" bi-weekly; later acknowledged as paper of Socialist Labour League.  
 News Line: daily paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party replaced Workers Press in 1976.  
 Parity Committee for the reconstruction of the Fourth International: see International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International.  
 Permanent Revolution: irregular journal of Workers Power.  
 Red Flag: monthly paper of the Revolutionary Workers Party.  
 Red Mole: monthly paper of the International Marxist Group; succeeded Black Dwarf, preceded Red Weekly.  
 Revolution: irregular youth journal of the Socialist League.  
 Revolutionary Communist Group: 1972 breakaway from International Socialism. Publicly (though unconvincingly) disavow Trotskyism. Publications: Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, Hands Off Ireland and Revolutionary Communist.  
 Revolutionary Communist: theoretical magazine of the Revolutionary Communist Group.  
 Revolutionary Communist Party (1944-49): unification of Trotskyist groups in Britain.  
 Revolutionary Communist Party (1980s): name adopted in 1981 by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, the 1977 avowedly Trotskyist breakaway from the Revolutionary Communist Group. Publishes (monthly) the next step, and holds annual conferences on "Preparing for Power".  
 Revolutionary Communist Tendency: predecessor of the Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Revolutionary Socialist League (1938-39): short-lived unification of Trotskyist groups in Britain.  
 Revolutionary Socialist League (1950s): clandestine grouping at the core of the Militant Tendency in the Labour Party. Set up by Ted Grant in 1950s; irregularly published Socialist Fight until 1963; began publication of Militant (initially as a monthly four-pager) in 1964; gained total control of Labour Party Young Socialists by 1970. Also publishes Militant Irish Monthly and an occasional international review.  
 Right to Work Campaign: now defunct organisation set up by International Socialism in the early 1970s.  
 Socialist Action: weekly paper of the Socialist League.  
 Socialist Appeal: publication of the 1940s Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Socialist Federation: breakaway formed in 1984 after expulsions from Socialist Workers Party.  
 Socialist Fight: predecessor (deceased 1963) of Militant.  
 Socialist Labour Group: British supporters of Pierre Lambert's International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, believed to exist as a tiny (too tiny even to be mentioned in the main body of this work) group of entrists in a single north London Labour Party. (Lambert broke with Healy's International Committee in 1971).  
 Socialist Labour League: predecessor (1959-73) of the Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 Socialist League, The: originated with a grouping in the Labour Party around The Week (1964); came out of the Labour Party in 1968 as the International Marxist Group; recognised by Mandel's Fourth International in 1969; in mid-1970s began sending members back into Labour Party; in 1982 dissolved itself to enter Labour "en bloc" as the Socialist League. IMG papers were Black Dwarf, Red Mole and Red Weekly; its Socialist Challenge (1977) claimed to be broad based; and its weekly paper since 1982 is Socialist Action.  
 Socialist Organiser: weekly paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance.  
 Socialist Organiser Alliance: formed in 1982 by the International-Communist League and the Workers Socialist League. Publishes Socialist Organiser.  
 Socialist Outlook: predecessor of Healy's The Newsletter.  
 Socialist Press: defunct paper of Workers Socialist League.  
 Socialist Review: monthly magazine of the Socialist Workers Party since the 1970s. Previously in early 1950s as journal of International Socialism.  
 Socialist Unity: platform on which International Marxist Group stood general election candidates in 1974, including Tariq Ali.  
 Socialist Worker: weekly paper of the Socialist Workers Party.  
 Socialist Workers Party: began life at time of Korean War in opposition to Trotskyist support for North Korea against the USA, as International Socialism. Originally published Labour Worker, now Socialist Worker, under the slogan "Neither Washington Nor Moscow But International Socialism". Numerous SWP front organisations of the 1970s are now defunct. Also publishes monthly Socialist Review and quarterly International Socialism.  
 Socialist Youth: paper of Labour Party Young Socialists (controlled by Revolutionary Socialist League).  
 Spartacist Britain: now renamed Workers Hammer.



Spartacists, or Spartacist League: British section of international Spartacist tendency; first established in Britain in 1976, publish *Workers Hammer* (formerly Spartacist Britain); distribute US publications *Workers Vanguard* and *Women and Revolution*.  
 the next step: monthly paper of the Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Trotskyist International Liaison Committee: defunct group set up by Workers Socialist League.  
 Week, The: 1964 paper of grouping now evolved into the Socialist League.  
 Women and Revolution: US publication of Spartacists.  
 Workers Action: defunct paper of International-Communist League.  
 Workers Against Racism: organisation set up and controlled by Revolutionary Communist Party.  
 Workers Fight: publication of 1930s Marxist League.  
 Workers Fight: 1970s predecessor of Workers Action.  
 Workers Hammer: monthly paper of Spartacists.  
 Workers International League: 1930s and '40s group led by Gerry Healy, now of Workers Revolutionary Party.  
 Workers Power: expelled from International Socialism in 1975; briefly united with the International-Communist League; went solo in 1976. Publications: *Workers Power* (fortnightly) and *Permanent Revolution* (irregular).  
 Workers Power: paper (not surprisingly) of Workers Power.  
 Workers Press: five-days-a-week predecessor of *News Line* until 1976.  
 Workers Socialist League: group led by Alan Thornett expelled from Workers Revolutionary Party in 1974. Published *Socialist Press*. Joint founders of Socialist Organiser Alliance in 1982 after virtual collapse.  
 Workers Revolutionary Party: British Section of International Committee of Fourth International, led by Gerry Healy. Publishes *News Line* (daily) and *Labour Review* (monthly). Previously *Socialist Labour League*, *The Group*, *Revolutionary Communist Party* (with others), *Workers International League* (a breakaway from the 1930s Militant Group).  
 Young Socialist: weekly paper of Young Socialists.  
 Young Socialists: youth group of Workers Revolutionary Party; expelled from Labour Party youth movement in 1964, publishes *Young Socialist*, above.  
 Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign: group set up and controlled by Revolutionary Socialist League via Labour Party Young Socialists.

## INDEX of organisations, publications and individuals

African National Congress: 45, 46, 119  
 Aims of Industry: 40, 106  
 Ali, Tariq: 14, 20, 54, 55, 56, 103, 118, 119  
 Allende, Salvador: 119  
 All Trades Unions Alliance: 109, 110  
 Andropov, Yuri: 73, 101  
*An Phoblacht/Republican News*: 116  
 Anti-Apartheid Movement: 119  
 Anti-Apartheid Movement, City of London Branch: 45  
 Anti-Nazi League: 41  
 Armand, Inessa: 25  
 August Bloc, The: 14, 15  
 Axelrod, Paul: 11  
  
 Bakers' Union (BFAWU): 109  
 Balham Group, The: 33  
*Baltimore Sun*, The: 33  
 Banda, Mike (Van Der Poorten): 55, 77  
 Banda, Tony (Van Der Poorten): 77  
 Barker, Martin: 75  
 Beale, Carlton: 30  
 Beckingham, Brian: 51, 52  
 Ben Bella: 68  
 Benn, Tony: 44, 45, 101, 103, 104, 105  
 Betjeman, Sir John: 65  
 Bevan, Andy: 51  
 Blackburn, Robin: 54, 89  
*Black Dwarf*: 55, 104  
 Blunkett, David: 53, 54  
*Bolshevik*: 27  
 Bolsheviks (see Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and Communist Party of the Soviet Union)  
 Bond, Sam: 121  
 Bowyer, Susanna: 100  
 Brezhnev, Leonid: 101  
 Bristol Trades Union Council: 51, 107  
 Bristol University Students Union: 41  
 Broad Left Organising Committee: 50, 51, 108

Bronstein, Lev Davidovitch (see Trotsky)  
 Brown, Dave: 71  
 Bukovsky, Vladimir: 89  
  
 Callinicos, Alex: 86, 87, 99, 101  
 Cameron, Colin: 78, 86  
 Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (see also Labour CND and Youth CND): 52, 56, 58, 85, 89, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102  
 Cannon, James P.: 23, 34  
 Castro, Fidel: 56, 86  
 Central Intelligence Agency (US): 40, 87, 90, 96, 117  
 Chamberlain, Neville: 30  
 Chile Socialist Defence Campaign: 119  
 Chile Solidarity Campaign: 119  
 Chkhaidze, Nikolai: 12, 25  
 Christian League of Southern Africa: 107  
 Churchill, Winston: 50  
 Civil and Public Services Association: 109  
*Cina*: 87  
*Class Fighter*: 83, 97, 99, 122  
 Clause Four: 122  
 Cliff, Tony (Ygail Gluckstein): 40, 64  
 Communist International: 19, 28, 35  
 Communist Party  
   of Chile: 118, 119  
   of China: 68  
   of France: 29  
   of Germany: 7, 65  
   of Great Britain: 33, 34, 35, 59, 60, 76  
   of the Soviet Union: 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 63, 76, 88  
   of Vietnam (see also Vietnamese Workers' Party): 117  
 Congress for Cultural Freedom (US): 40  
 Conservative Party, The: 53

Council for Social Democracy: 52  
Council of Peoples' Commissars: 20  
Council of Post Office Unions: 87

*Daily Mirror*, The: 60  
*Daily Worker*, The: 60  
Daniken, Erich Von: 66, 67, 79  
de la Tour, Frances: 59  
Delon, Alain: 31  
Dewey Commission (US): 30, 31  
Djilas, Milovan: 39  
Doriot, Jacques: 7

East London Workers Against Racism: 46  
Eastman, Max: 26  
Engels, Frederick: 12, 13  
European Economic Community: 11, 115, 116  
European Nuclear Disarmament: 90  
*Evening Post*, (Bristol): 86

Fabian Society: 61  
*Fight Racism Fight Imperialism*: 43, 44  
Fire Brigades Union: 109  
Foot, Paul: 43, 101, 115, 117, 118  
Fourth International ("World Party of the Socialist Revolution"): 28, 30, 31, 32, 35, 37, 42, 49, 50, 63, 68, 73, 126  
(see also separate listings of various splits:  
United Secretariat (Mandel)  
International Committee (Healy)  
Revolutionary Marxist Tendency  
Spartacist tendency  
International Socialism (and Socialist Workers Party—UK)  
Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International  
International Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International

Latin American Bureau of the Fourth International (Posadist)  
Fourth International (Posadist), (see also Revolutionary Workers Party-Posadist): 32  
Franco, Francisco: 29, 119  
Fryer, Peter: 97  
Further Education Labour Students: 123

Gaddafi, Muammar: 60  
Gairy, Sir Eric: 67  
Gelderen, C Van: 23  
Gillard, Peter: 35, 36  
Goldstein, Emmanuel: 125  
Gomulka, Wladyslaw: 21  
GPU (State Political Administration—Soviet security police): 29  
Grant, Ted: 37, 49, 50, 72, 73, 76, 82, 84  
Group, The: 37  
Groves, Reg: 33  
*Guardian*, The: 56, 84, 86  
Guevara, Che: 60

Hallgreen, Mauritz: 31  
Hamilton, John: 53  
*Hands Off Ireland*: 45  
Harman, Chris: 41, 122  
Haston, Jock: 34, 36  
Hattersley, Roy: 105  
Hatton, Derek: 53, 54, 121, 123  
Healy, Gerry: 34, 36, 37, 49, 50, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65  
Hitler, Adolf: 30, 35  
Ho Chi Minh: 118

Independent Labour Party: 34  
Industrial Research and Information Service (IRIS): 7, 8  
International Brigades: 29  
International Committee (Healy): 63

International-Communist League: 14, 42, 57, 63, 89, 98  
International Leninist Workers Party: 63  
*International Leninist Workers Party Bulletin*: 63, 64  
International Marxist Group: 37, 40, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 63, 65, 68, 72, 74, 76, 89, 98, 103, 104, 110, 117  
*International Marxist Review*: 68  
International Secretariat (of the Fourth International): 36, 37, 40  
International Socialism (see also Socialist Workers Party—UK): 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 64, 74, 76  
*International Socialism*: 41  
International Socialist (1950s): 37, 49  
Inter-Regional Conference of United Social-Democrats: 18  
Irish Freedom Movement: 46  
Irish Solidarity Movement: 45

James, C L R: 34  
Jaruzelski, Wojciech: 21  
Jenkin, Patrick: 53  
Joffe, Adolf: 26

Kamenev, Lev: 27  
Karwahne, Bernhold: 7  
Kautsky, Karl: 13  
*Keep Left*: 61  
Kent, Bruce: 52, 97, 99  
Khrushchov, N S: 25, 87, 88  
Kidron, Michael: 40, 87  
King, Tom: 21  
Kinnock, Neil: 103, 105  
Kuibyshev, Valerian: 27

Labour CND: 98, 100  
Labour Party, The: 34, 36, 37, 40, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 68, 74, 89, 98, 99, 100, 101, 104, 105, 106, 114, 115, 116, 120, 121

Labour Party Young Socialists: 50, 51, 58, 61, 93, 94, 99, 108, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123  
*Labour Review*: 60, 119  
*Labour Worker*: 40  
Lambert, Pierre: 32, 65  
Latin American Bureau of the Fourth International (Posadist): 66  
Lear, Edward: 65  
*Left*: 61  
Left Zimmerwaldists: 18  
Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 52, 54, 63, 76, 77, 82, 97, 114  
Ley, Dr Robert: 21  
Liberal Party, The: 53  
Liebknecht, Karl: 65  
Liquidators, The: 14, 15  
Livingstone, Ken: 60, 100, 120  
Luxembourg, Rosa: 65

McCann, Eamonn: 85  
MacGregor, Ian: 78  
Malos, John: 68  
Mandel, Ernest (Germain): 50, 55, 77  
Martov, Yuli: 17  
Marx, Eleanor: 54  
Marx, Karl: 12, 13, 55, 83, 115, 116  
Marxist League, The: 34  
Mensheviks: 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, 27  
Mercader, Ramon: 31  
MI5: 7  
*Militant*: 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 73, 75, 77, 84, 85, 89, 93, 94, 97, 106, 108, 109, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125  
Militant Group (1938): 34  
Mitchell, Alex: 104, 105  
Molotov, Vyacheslav: 34  
Molyneux, John: 82, 83  
Moreno, Nahuel: 65  
*Morning Star*, The: 60  
Morris, William: 54



MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola): 119  
Mugabe, Robert: 119  
Muggeridge, Malcolm: 126

Narodniki: 10  
*Nashe Slovo*: 17  
National Association For Freedom: 89  
National Association of Local Government Officers: 121  
National Front: 41  
National Graphical Association: 73  
National Liberation Front (Vietnam): 117  
National Organisation of Labour Students: 122, 123  
National Rank and File Movement: 41  
National Union of Mineworkers: 62, 108  
National Union of Students: 55, 122, 123  
National Union of Teachers: 102  
Nazi Labour Front: 21  
Nellist, Dave: 122  
New Communist Party: 104, 106  
*New Left Review*: 89  
*Newsletter*, The: 35, 60, 97  
*News Line*: 60, 62, 104, 107, 109, 116  
*New Socialist*: 53, 101, 117  
*New Worker*, The: 106  
Nkrumah, Kwame: 119  
*Novy Mir*: 18

*Obey*: 43  
*Observer*, The: 83  
Orlov, Yuri: 88  
Orwell, George: 28, 125, 126  
Otzovists, The: 14  
Oxford Union: 55

Pablo, Michael (Gabriel Raptis): 49, 50, 62, 68, 77  
Palestine Liberation Organisation: 60  
Parvus, Alexander: 13

People's Anti-Fascist Front: 34  
Peoples Press Printing Society: 60  
*Permanent Revolution*: 42  
Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks: 26  
Petrograd Soviet: 18  
Pinochet, Augusto: 118  
Political Bureau of the Bolsheviks: 27  
Pol Pot: 8  
Popular Fronts against Fascism and War: 28, 29  
Posadas, Juan: 66, 67, 79, 95  
Post Office Engineering Union: 108, 109  
Powell, Enoch: 55  
*Pravda*, (publication of the Bolsheviks/ Communist Party of the Soviet Union): 14, 18, 27, 76  
*Pravda*, (Trotsky's paper): 14  
*Private Eye*: 60, 64  
Pugh, Celia: 56

Reagan, Ronald: 74, 81, 83, 85, 94  
*Red Flag*: 67, 79, 115  
Redgrave, Vanessa: 59  
*Red Mole*: 55, 104  
*Red Weekly*: 104  
*Revolution*: 99, 122  
Revolutionary Communist Group: 41, 43, 44, 45, 46, 61, 64, 78, 116  
Revolutionary Communist Party (1944): 34, 35, 36, 37, 46, 59  
Revolutionary Communist Party (ex-Revolutionary Communist Tendency): 41, 46, 47, 59, 65, 75, 78, 100, 101, 103, 106, 108, 116, 120, 122  
Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist: 46  
Revolutionary Communist Tendency (see also Revolutionary Communist Party, above): 42, 45, 46, 47, 105  
Revolutionary Marxist Tendency: 68  
Revolutionary Socialist League (pre-war): 34

Revolutionary Socialist League (Militant): 37, 39, 49, 50, 51, 52, 68, 93, 94, 98, 99  
Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation: 54  
Revolutionary Workers Party (Posadists): 66, 67, 79, 95, 115  
Right to Work Campaign: 41, 108  
Rock Against Racism: 41  
Ruddock, Joan: 99, 100  
Rosewell, Roger: 106, 110, 111  
Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (see also Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Communist Party of the Soviet Union): 10, 14

Sakharov, Andrei: 89  
Sara, Henry: 34  
Scales, Prunella: 59  
Scargill, Arthur: 105, 107, 108  
Shachtman, Max: 40, 64, 83  
Sharif, Omar: 59  
Shaw, Robert: 35  
Sinn Fein, (formerly Provisional Sinn Fein): 116  
"Officials" (now Workers Party-Ireland): 63  
Slaughter, Cliff: 78  
Smith, Winston: 126  
Social Democratic Party: 40, 52, 77, 97  
*Socialist Action*: 56, 57, 58, 65, 77, 84, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 110, 114, 115, 120, 121  
*Socialist Appeal*: 35  
*Socialist Challenge*: 55, 56, 76, 77  
Socialist Federation: 47  
*Socialist Fight*: 50  
Socialist Labour League (see also Workers Revolutionary Party): 59, 60, 61, 64, 66, 88, 89, 97  
Socialist League (1880s): 54  
Socialist League (1930s): 54  
Socialist League (1980s): 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 75, 98, 99, 103, 104, 109, 116

*Socialist Organiser*: 42, 57, 58, 60, 76, 84, 89, 96, 98, 100, 114, 115, 120, 122  
Socialist Organiser Alliance: 42, 43, 57, 60, 63, 83, 97, 98, 99  
*Socialist Outlook*: 35  
Socialist Party, The (US): 40  
*Socialist Press*: 57, 63  
Socialist Revolutionaries: 18, 25  
*Socialist Worker*: 35, 40, 43, 57, 75, 76, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 98, 101, 102, 107, 109, 114, 115, 118, 122  
Socialist Workers Party (see also International Socialism): 35, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 55, 57, 61, 64, 65, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89, 98, 101, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108, 116, 117, 121, 122, 125  
Socialist Workers Party (US): 34, 40, 64  
*Socialist Youth*: 61, 122  
Sokolovskaya, Alexandra: 10  
Solidarnosc: 21, 56, 85, 89, 90, 107  
Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr: 88, 89  
*Soviet Weekly*: 63  
Spanish Young Socialists Defence Campaign: 119  
*Spartacist*, (US): 43  
*Spartacist Britain*: 65, 91, 96, 105, 114  
Spartacists: 39, 42, 43, 57, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 79, 90, 91, 93, 95, 96, 105, 110, 118, 119, 120  
Spartacus League (of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg): 65  
SPATC: 46  
Special Branch: 44  
Stalin, Joseph: 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 31, 42, 59, 76, 82, 87, 88, 125  
*Sun*, The: 7, 8, 105  
*Sunday Mirror*, The: 111  
*Sunday Times*, The: 83

Taaffe, Peter: 50  
Tameside Trades Council: 108, 116  
Tatchell, Peter: 106

Tebbit, Norman: 21  
Thayer, George: 7  
*the next step*: 46, 47, 78, 100, 118, 120  
*The Week*: 54  
Thatcher, Margaret: 45, 62, 81, 88, 89,  
101, 102, 111, 116  
Thomas, Martin: 114  
Thompson, Edward P.: 101, 102  
Thorez, Maurice: 29  
Thornett, Alan: 57, 63  
*Times*, The: 50  
Tito, Josip Broz: 39  
Trades Union Congress: 60, 73, 108,  
110, 120  
Trevett, Eric: 104  
*Tribune*: 49  
Trotsky, Leon (Lev Davidovitch Bron-  
stein): 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14,  
15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,  
25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35,  
39, 40, 42, 46, 47, 49, 54, 63, 64,  
67, 75, 76, 77, 83, 93, 96, 100, 109,  
113, 125, 126  
Trotskyist International Liaison Com-  
mittee: 63  
*Tygodnic Mazows*: 89  
  
Underhill, Lord: 50  
Union of Post Office Workers: 107  
UNITA: 119  
United Secretariat (Mandel): 55, 63,  
65, 66, 68

Van Der Poorten (see Mike and Tony  
Banda)  
Vatzetis, General: 20  
Vietnamese Workers Party (see also  
Communist Party of Vietnam): 118  
Vietnam Solidarity Campaign: 40, 117

Walesa, Lech: 56, 90, 111  
Walker, Maxine: 44  
West, Timothy: 59

Wicks, Harry: 34  
*Workers Action*: 42, 57  
Workers Against Racism: 46  
Workers' and Peasants' Inspection: 27  
Workers Fight: 42, 57  
*Workers Fight*: 34, 57  
Workers' International League: 34  
Workers Party (Britain—see Internatio-  
nal Leninist Workers Party): 63, 65  
Workers Party (US): 40  
Workers Power: 42, 47, 109  
*Workers Power*: 42, 43, 78, 118  
*Workers Press*: 28, 60  
Workers Revolutionary Party (see also  
Socialist Labour League): 35, 55,  
57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 68, 72, 73,  
77, 78, 89, 97, 104, 105, 107, 108,  
109, 110, 119, 122  
Workers Socialist League: 15, 57, 62,  
63, 65, 89, 98  
World Psychiatric Association: 107

Young Communist League: 51  
*Young Socialist*: 61, 97, 122  
Young Socialists (Workers Revolution-  
ary Party): 97  
Young Workers' Assembly: 108  
Youth CND: 98, 99, 110  
Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign:  
108, 122  
Yurchik, Marian: 90

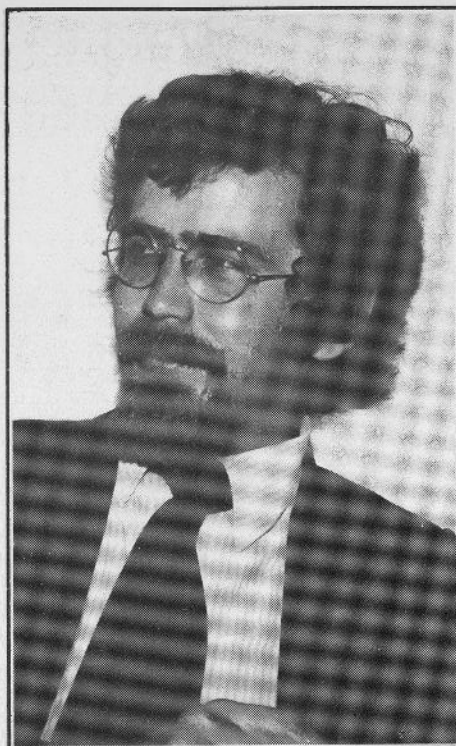
*Zo Haderekhb*: 90



DENVER WALKER has never been a Trotskyist and, despite any appearances to the contrary, denies any family relationship with the subject of this work.

He has, however, encountered numerous Trotskyist individuals and organisations in the course of his work in the labour, communist and peace movements since the 1960s, and long ago came to the conclusion that their "revolutionary" phrases usually boil down in practice to opposition to serious efforts to establish peace and socialism.

Entering working life just after his seventeenth birthday in 1966, with a wide range of employment ending with seven years as a Post Office worker until 1980, he has since then been a journalist with *The New Worker*.



Harney and Jones, London  
1985

£1.00

barbara:20/02/2015 11:48:40



0946817049

7049